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" FRIENDSHIP, LOVE, CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE :—THE BALM AND
THE BLESSING OF LIFE." *Atterbury.*

IN THREE VOLUMES.

VOL. III.

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C R A N M E R.

CHAPTER I.

COMPUNCTIONIOUS VISITINGS AT STUTTGARD.—THE TRIAL.—THE RELAPSE.

“ADIEU to the Village delights!” is the commencement of one of Lord Lyttleton’s most interesting pastoral ballads; and the language is here used as a prelude to events of a very different complexion from those which the preceding chapter has disclosed. “No more of talk,”* of fragrant flowers and of happy human beings, who have braided their bridal locks with orange blossoms and roses. We are now to treat of the operation of varying passions: at one moment bright, though strong and impetuous; at another, shadowy, dark, and over-

* “No more of talk where God or angel guest.”

MILTON.

whelming: and it is the influence of intense and exclusive AFFECTION, which gives a keener edge and a more impetuous impulse to the direction of these passions.

The reader must, therefore, accompany me to Stuttgard: for, as we have just learnt, Reginald has gained a complete "victory," and piles of uncounted gold ducats wait his grasping hand. We left him* returned from his first reconnoissance of the Castle of Fürstenhoff, and afterwards from a little gambling skirmishing at the *café*, where all the gay and the great of Stuttgard were wont occasionally to assemble. It will be recollected that Reginald won about ten pounds of English money, and like a *preu chevalier* had resolved to devote his gains to the embellishment of his mistress's person. It will be also remembered, that that mistress had resolved not to be adorned by means which she considered to be so perfectly unworthy an upright and an honourable man. Caroline had, in fact, so expressed herself in her immediate reply to the last rhapsodical letter of her lover. A part of her letter is deserving of quotation.

"While I thank you for the generous impulse which led to the devotion of your gains, I must fairly tell you, as 'I love you with an honest love,' that I can never consent to be clad in ornaments

* Vol. ii. p. 245.

so acquired. But this is secondary.—I trembled as I read your account—and much more your success. For God's sake! as it was the *first*, so let it be the *last*. I look only to your safe personal return; untarnished by such lucre, and even unsuccessful in your ulterior operations. Be only *the same Reginald Cranmer* as you were when you left me; and so being, you are 'all the world' to your affectionate and ever devoted,

“ C. P.”

Now, before the receipt of this letter, Reginald (“*ce n'est que le premier pas qui coute!*” methinks I hear the reader exclaim,) had more than once or twice resorted to the same *café*; and like a man who voluntarily, artificially, and flimsily disguises or postpones the commission of a *bad* action, which he is *resolved* in the end to *commit*, at first associated with the ordinary readers of newspapers and pamphlets. His friend, the *Chargé d'Affaires*, was quietly sipping his coffee here, and one of the banking-house of Blinktofft calmly smoking a pipe there. In an adjoining room the billiard-table was surrounded by dexterous players. Our hero could be rarely matched, and was yet more rarely surpassed, in this game. He took up a queue, and carelessly, as it were, on the breaking up of a game, he made one stroke, or long hazard, which evinced unquestionable skill.

“Will you take a turn with me?” said a gentlemanly man, whom Reginald recognised as having been at the court-circle.

“With all my heart,” replied our hero, and beat his antagonist at both games, (the short, and the long and short,) within twenty minutes.

“What is our stake?” said the vanquished antagonist.

“Nothing ; only pay for the table”—promptly replied Reginald.

“Excuse me, sir,” resumed the gentleman ; “the dearest of all play is, the play for *nothing*. Here are two ducats.”

Reginald smiled, put them in his pocket, and was about to leave the room, when he was accosted by one, all over whiskers and mustachios, an officer in the Russian service, who challenged him to a renewal of the game. As he had won, he very good-naturedly consented, and it was to be double or quits.

He had now a very dexterous antagonist to contend with. Reginald missed a long hazard, from the ball being too much *cushioned*. His adversary seemed to leap upon his own good fortune ; and as the game was *shorts*, he took up the queue, sat to work, frowned, poked out his hairy lips, balanced himself, struck, one after another, a succession of very skilful strokes, and won the game in ten

minutes. He then seemed to suppress the chuckle of triumph, but holding out his hand, Reginald placed the two ducats within it; and was preparing again to quit the room, when the marker observed to him, in French, that "there was a gentleman present who had played with Mr. Cranmer, in England, and would like to renew a similar acquaintance with him?"

"Very well," said our hero, secretly piqued at his defeat, and fortified by the conviction that he had, as yet, lost nothing, but was absolutely rather a gainer.

Reginald had no recollection of the stranger's countenance or person, but playing the long and short game, he may be said to have "beaten him in a canter."

"Would he try his hand again?"

"Most willingly;" and now the room getting warm, and his frame being excited, he called for a glass of hock and soda-water, the grand *Byronic* panacea. It was evident that the stranger was improved in his play, or that our hero was playing very indifferently, for the game was quickly won by the former. Then first came across the cheeks of Reginald Cranmer the hectic flush of the gambler's fever. He was roused as well as warm. "Are you for another game?" and he called for a glass of soda-water alone. The third game was played,

and the scales were again equipoised. "Quite enough for to-night!" exclaimed Reginald; and he rushed from *Sylla* to *Charybdis*.

He again visited the spot where he had gained his first gambling laurels—where was the *rouge et noir* table. He was speedily recognized by his first antagonist; and I suppose there is a peculiar, imperceptible, subtle, undefinable element, or gaseous matter, which sometimes fills a gamblinghouse-atmosphere—and which at once lulling prudence, and dispelling reflection, plunges the uninitiated deeper and deeper in its whirling vortex—for Reginald was, all of a sudden, a bold as well as a winning champion. He hardly waited to be asked, and almost taunted his ancient adversary to a repetition of the former night's treat. That adversary—like a hidden fox, watching the slow and steady pace of the approaching goose—accepted the challenge with alacrity, confident of the ultimate result; and Reginald very soon found the ducats diminishing in his purse. Still he went on; and seemed almost to madden as he continued the game. "Why was *chance* to be uniformly *against* him? It was idiotic folly." "A glass of hock!" then some soda-water: then hock again. A little group was collecting around.

"Nothing cools and concentrates more than cold brandy and water," uttered a voice from an appa-

rently old face, topped by straggling locks, which seemed to be not altogether unknown to Reginald. "Will you allow me to mix it?" it continued.

"Do so—do so—quickly," replied Reginald, without looking; and the result was, that *two-thirds* of the contents of the glass were *brandy*.

It is scarcely necessary to mention the result. Reginald Cranmer left the *café* with the loss of *fourscore ducats*. His recollection was not quite extinguished; for on getting into bed, at the Waldhorn, he coolly observed, "Thank God, it was not *a hundred!*" Such is the *salve* with which the spirit of evil furnishes a wounded conscience.

The morning came: and oh! what a morning to the hitherto uncontaminated heart, and untiring spirits, of Reginald Cranmer! His fevered frame—his heightened pulse—his half-opened eye—his throbbing breast—where

"Repentance reared her snaky crest."

But hark!—the post-boy sounds his horn, and there is a letter from Caroline Ponton. Crane brought him the letter—adding, "Shall I extract the bullets from the pistols left by Mr. Fornham?"

"No; point them to this heart!"—screamed Reginald—leaping up, and baring his breast.

"Why, how now, sir?"

“Ask no questions, but leave me. Give me the letter.”

Crane departed, giving the letter.

“It is from Caroline. I cannot read it.” He rang the bell violently. Crane re-appeared.

“Here, take you the letter—and read it out manfully to me.”

“Sir?”

“None of your sirs; but do as I tell you.”

There was a knock at the door. “Enter.” A letter from the bankers, for an immediate conference.

“I’ll have no conference but with Caroline Ponton. Read the letter.”

“Allow me, sir, to leave it till you are less excited. Miss Ponton would not be overpleased at my being acquainted with the contents of her letter; and besides, it is so thoroughly *crossed*, that I should bungle two words out of three, and be half the morning getting through it.”

Reginald was rubbing his forehead slightly with his left hand, as Crane uttered these words, and in a more composed voice, bade him “leave the letter, as he should devour ever particle of it alone.” And yet, never was our hero less alone; and the author of that letter never seemed to occupy a closer or fuller place near his heart than when he perused it. His first action was to —; but the reader re-

quires food more substantial than even the *basia* of Joannes Secundus. The part that most affected Reginald, was *that* which might be supposed to have a closer connection with the wretched pastime of the preceding evening; and Reginald almost shook as he read what follows:—

“You ask me, or you *admit* me, to be

‘A beacon in tempest, in peril an aid.’

What I *have* been, I do not pretend to know; but what I *will* be, I will fairly tell you. In every form, to check, to terrify, and to drag you from the precincts of the gambling-table—expect to see my figure! It is because I love you, to an intensity which equally defies and forbids description, that I importune, and even command. Oh! my Reginald, forgive all this earnest strain; but I see farther than yourself. Even fifty times the ducats now in store for you, would not satisfy the fiend-like rapacity, or check the perilous adventure, of a confirmed gambler. But you are not so. Ah, no! yet beware the beginning. You are now in a foreign land; unobserved by all relations and friends; master of your own movements, with the expectancy of a large addition to your fortune. These are *stimulants* to the more desperate experiments of the gambling-table. These will entangle you in such meshes, that the most subtle art, and the most

determined effort, can scarcely extricate you from their baneful effects. But if, haplessly, *my* voice—for the first time, dearest Reginald—fail to have its effect upon you, I entreat and importune you in the united voices of your *mother*, your *sisters*, and your *uncle*.”

“Enough! enough!” exclaimed Reginald, throwing the letter from him, and burying himself beneath the bed-clothes. “But I deserve it: yes, I deserve it all. She has a right to command. She is my *wife*: my affianced bride! And yet, she might have spared me the reproaches of my *mother*,—my *sisters*!—and, dearest Maria! it were perhaps well that thy sweet and innocent spirit were at rest! I cannot bear it:” and he wept aloud. Tom Crane, who had purposely fixed himself outside, close to the door, agitated by a thousand fears as to what might be the result of this wayward or mad mood of his master, feigned an excuse for entering his apartment. “Crane, is that *you*?” exclaimed his master.

“It is, sir—what message shall I take back to the bankers?”

“What bankers, man? I know nothing about bankers. Go directly to the Abbey, and tell my mother and sisters to come to me, for I am about to make my will; but on no account go to Miss Ponton!”

“What may all this mean, sir? You are now at Stuttgard, and your *CASE* comes on to-day!” It was the proper *thunder-bolt* to bring Reginald to his senses.*

He rubbed his face with both hands, leapt out of bed, seized the rejected letter; and, pressing it to his lips, exclaimed, “Thank God! there is *YET* room to be virtuous!”

Within twenty minutes he had “made his toilet” and was at his breakfast-table. It was near twelve o’clock. At one, the cause was to come on. The hotel seemed to be full of curious, buzzing people, who were conscious of there being *something*, but they could not precisely tell what, in the wind. A messenger from the Court arrived; and Cranmer, with Tom Crane, pressed onward for the Town Hall. There was a considerable crowd about the outward porch; and Fornham, on the look-out for Reginald, presented himself, and urged him to take a circuitous direction, so as to avoid the more direct passage.

“Why was this?”

“Oblige me, sir, and you shall not repent.” In two minutes Reginald had entered the interior of the Court, where the judges had assembled: and it was within the hour that he heard his *OWN CAUSE*

* “And rouse him, like a rattling peal of thunder.”

DRYDEN.

named. He had almost leapt from the seat. The Baron Maizendocher, one of the leading judges, observed it; and beckoned to him, for Reginald had dined with him at the royal table.

“You need not be agitated, sir, for if I understand the matter correctly, there is no defendant to oppose your claims.” The court-cryer sounded his bell; and there was a general *hush* throughout the hall, as he proceeded thus.—“Who opposes the claims of Reginald Cranmer, only son of the late Reginald Cranmer, Esq., who died and was buried in this city, some six years ago? Once, twice, thrice!” Up jumped the subtle Peezenfeezer, with the Baron Vesenmeyer by his side. “What say you,” continued the court-cryer, “that the said Reginald Cranmer should not enjoy his paternal property and rights?”

“We say, that they belong not to *him*, but to *ourselves*.”

“Address the Court, and make your case clear as ye may”—responded the cryer, and sat down; having, in fact, strictly performed all his part.

A general astonishment prevailed; but the respondents continued, unhesitatingly and undismayed. Reginald’s counsel beckoned him to come near, and furnish him with all the necessary points for reply. The shape of the course taken by the respondents was as crooked as untenable.

“The parchments and title-deeds,” said they, “had been deposited in the Castle of Fürstenhoff under the express jurisdiction and public seal of the Court : and the appellant’s uncle, Major Dacre, had ratified that deposition. The Castle in question, where the appellant’s father had resided a long time, was the property of the Baron ; and every thing within it was subject to his right and claim ; now that the period for *proving* that claim had *lapsed* !” —

“Lapsed,” observed Reginald’s counsel, instantly getting up and throwing himself upon the protection of the Court.—“It has *not* elapsed : for, according to the laws of this country, where either party claims the king’s special protection, by a warrant executed accordingly, we say *here*, as they say in England, ‘*nullum tempus occurrit Regi.*’ But the respondents know to the full as well as *any* member of this Court, either upon, or below the bench, that, at this present moment, there are yet *six months* open for the prosecution of the claim in question. I call your honours’ express attention to this fact—it is notorious—it is incontrovertible. And see further, my judges and masters, of what flimsy materials the defence of the respondents is composed ! yea, look with grave attention, *who*, and *what* are they ? who stand up here, with unblushing effrontery, to oppose the

rights of an honest and honourable young man. (Cranmer here hung down his head, blushing deeply; not from a sense of modesty, but from a recollection of the *rouge et noir-table*). Duellists! Murderers! Assassins! I see them wincing, because they know they are *truly* designated; and I mean to exhibit proofs—yea, damning proofs!—for ‘*littera scripta manet*,’ that these champions of iniquity were in league with a lawyer, resident in the same village with the appellant, bribing him, at a premium of five hundred pounds, to try, by every effort, art, and stratagem, to prevent the appellant from quitting the shores of England, in order that such time, or six months, might *elapse*, before the final claim was substantiated by my client!”

The Court here conferred awhile; and the chief justice called upon the counsel to substantiate, if possible, the charge of being in league with an English lawyer.

“Let Jonathan Silvertop be called,” quoth the counsel to the court-cryer, “for I *know* him to have resided in this city for the last two months.”

But no Silvertop appeared.

“Will any man swear upon the Holy Gospels that that wretch has *not* been in court during the day?” exclaimed the counsel.

“I swear upon the Holy Gospels that he *has* been in the court, and that he rushed out as the learned

gentleman alluded to his connivance with the respondents," solemnly observed Fornham, by the aid of an interpreter.

"Let that man be called," said the chief judge.

The public cryer sounded his bell once, twice, thrice—for Jonathan Silvertop to *return* and give evidence ! but he returned not. This was his last stake.

"My master and judges," continued Reginald's counsel, "will you allow me to cross-examine the respondents themselves?"

"You have the privilege," rejoined the judge; "but it is needless in a case so clear and convincing as that before us. There is not a shadow of substantial resistance to the appellant's claim. The property must be surrendered to him, and the Castle kept, in a measure, in abeyance, till the rightful owner obtain his property. Let three officers of the court sleep there to-night. The trial is at an end."

So saying, the Court broke up; and after a respectful bow to the judges, and a hearty shake of the hand of his counsel, Reginald sought his hotel; and the first thing he did was, almost as the last blast of the postman's horn was blowing, for the making up of the English mail, to write the joyous note, rather than letter, which reached Caroline on the morning of her sister's marriage. Having dis-

patched this, a load seemed to be moved off his chest as well as mind ; and he rubbed his hands, and arranged his implements of writing as if he would compose ballads and roundelays, indulging in all manner of capricious and crochetty sallies ! In the midst of these vagaries, the Messrs. Blink-tofft's were announced ; then came the *Chargé d'Affaires*, then the *Préfet*, then the private secretary to the king, and Reginald's room was crowded as if it had been a morning levee. Congratulations on all sides followed. When was the Castle to be attacked ? and when the infamous Silvertop to be whipped out of the town ? Good fortune rarely comes quietly and of one sort. Had Reginald accepted all the invitations to dinner on that day, he had never seen the Castle, or his own country again : but he did accept the *first* from his bankers, with whom, in fact, it was equally his duty and his best interest to dine. The day passed pleasantly. These worthy men had been in court, and anxiously witnessed the result. At parting, Reginald claimed, or rather solicited, the miniatures* which he had deposited with them ; for the effect of Caroline's letter that morning, had induced a strong as well as secret wish to see her *resemblance*, as he resolved to consider it. He pressed the miniature to his heart and to his lips, and sallied towards home the happiest of human beings.

He must, of necessity, pass the *café*. A crowd was in front of it. Two gentlemen had been drawing swords upon each other, and being separated, one was carried into the coffee-house, copiously bleeding, the other was led home. Reginald suffered himself to be diverted into the *café*, and in spite of every inquiry as to the name of the wounded gentleman, he could obtain no satisfactory information. Somebody said *Schlam-anseer*, and somebody *Gruffendoch*: whoever he might be, he was taken up stairs, and immediately attended by a surgeon. On mixing with the company, Reginald was quickly recognized, and hailed as the champion in the victorious cause of which the fame had rung throughout the city. It was pleasant for a young and generous bosom to be so noticed; and Reginald took his glass of *liqueur* with one; ratifée, here; curaçoa, there. The room was hot, and he was absolutely in a fever from good fortune. Would the billiards tempt him? No. Nor *rouge et noir*? No. Nor the chess? nor the dice? Nothing of the kind. All his former antagonists seemed to be marshalled in array before him. He let them pass on till the individual appeared who had beaten him so soundly at billiards. A new impetus was instantly given to all his feelings. *Revenge* seemed to possess him—he could tear him to pieces—he could trample him in the dust—

and he almost called him out, with a loud voice, to a renewal of the contest. The adversary leaped inwardly for joy at the unguarded behaviour of the challenger: and quietly smoothing down his whiskers, turning up his coat sleeves, and wearing his hat lightly upon his head, so as to make the front rim come a good deal over his eyes, he collected and concentrated his forces, as it were, and seemed to be confident of success. The banker's hock, with superadded ratifée and curaçoa, could be no match against the white Dutch beer which had so coolly and comfortably lodged in the stranger's stomach—and Reginald was rapidly fleeced of every remaining ducat in his pocket. Still he would play on. He lost again; and depositing the two miniatures in pawn or pledge, he rushed out of doors without uttering another word to his opponent.

It was broad, beautiful moonlight, with the moon nearly at the full. He stopt to breathe leisurely, and to gaze upon the tranquil orb, as it was now mounting high in the heavens.

“My Caroline, my blessed Caroline! — everlasting thanks for thy dear monitory letter. Yet I have sinned again. I have forgotten thy wishes, and disregarded thy most earnest entreaties. Well, well! 'tis for the last time—

‘By yon blessed moon I swear!’

Nay, by thy dear self : for I have thee in my pocket !” He felt and the miniature was gone. “ Who had stolen it ?” Who ?—“ Was there ever so base a robber as—himself ? His own hands had been deliberately instrumental to the displacing it. Thus,” said he, stamping his foot, and slapping his forehead smartly, “ one vice leads to another ; and the train of all manner of diabolical mischief is fired before the gunpowder is thought to be laid. Thou great Omnipotent ! around whose eternal presence these magnificent worlds are rolling—thou Ruler of the night as of the day—hear, pity, and pardon ! I drop on the earth, the most abject of debased slaves ; I rise, the most comforted of rational beings. My prayer is heard. Caroline, thou hast been indeed—

‘ A beacon in tempest, in peril an aid.’ ”

He took “ courage of heart” as he rose up ; shaking off all the base particles which had hitherto seemed to clog or cloud his understanding. There was a vigorous freshness about his manner of thought and bearing, which bade defiance to every temptation from the quarter just quitted. Were all the tables covered with golden ducats, and awaiting his grasp, he would rather perish than put his finger upon one of them. He had, however, left the *café a debtor*, and ere the next moon-rising that debt should be

abundantly redeemed. He now walked with a confident step: enjoyed the delicious fragrance of the night air, as well as the tranquillity of the hour, and the extraordinary brightness of the streets. He was rapidly gaining on the *Waldhorn*, when two figures were seen moving backwards and forwards in front of the hotel; they stopt as he neared it.

"Yes, it is my master," said Tom Crane. "How now?"

"This is Mr. Fornham, sir, who wishes to speak with you alone."

"I will speak with no one, unless my confidential lacquey be present," replied Reginald—in a sort of pompous tone and deportment.

"Then I am sorry, sir, not to have it in my power to make a most important communication to you."

"That may be, sir; but my life shall never again be jeopardized in this business with my own free will."

"Let Crane tie my hands, sir, as tightly as you please, before I enter the house with you. I desire only freedom of utterance; but what I utter is matter for your *exclusive* ear. Upon no other terms will I open my mouth."

"Crane," said Reginald abruptly, but mildly, "you may leave us to ourselves."

CHAPTER II.

THE FURSTENHOFF VICTORY.

As the evening was very warm, Reginald no sooner ordered the wax candles to be lighted, than, throwing up the window, or rather, opening the window-doors, he walked out upon the lawn, (having secretly possessed himself of a short poniard, kept in his writing-desk, against any sudden attack of his companion), and requesting Fornham to accompany him, they walked very leisurely together—now upon the grass, and now upon the gravel-walk. In the centre of the lawn there was a marble fountain, of which the descending water, in large pellucid drops, pattered refreshingly as it fell. At the summit of the ascending water, the moonlight effect converted the whole into a spray of diamonds.

“What have you to tell me, Fornham? be expeditious—but above all things be just to yourself!”

“No, sir; I will do *better*—I will be just to you. If I meted out justice to myself, these hands

perhaps might as well be busy in manufacturing a halter !”

“No more of this—proceed.”

“You must take possession of the Castle to-morrow.”

“Such is my fixed determination.”

“And you must allow me, as heretofore, to accompany you ?”

“Is this all you have to say, which requires such secrecy ?”

“A good deal more. Silvertop will be there with five desperadoes ; and he will wear his *black* wig, having worn a *white* one ever since he has been here. Leave him to *me*. There is one glorious impediment put aside. Peezenfeezer has got his *quietus* !”

“How ?”

“He was the man who was so desperately wounded before the coffee-house this evening ; and as rogues usually disagree in the long-run, (would that I had not *experience* of what I say !) the Baron Vesenmeyer, who wounded him, is in custody.”

“On my faith, Fornham, but THIS is excellent. Are you *sure* ?”

“Quite sure. Now, sir, do not delay your visit to the Castle beyond to-morrow ; and if you *can* so manage it, storm it towards midnight, so that the

“Fornham, swear to me upon this poinard, (drawing it, flashing by the moon-beam, from his bosom) that you will be my liegeman in every true and honest particular, in this momentous and perhaps, perilous adventure ! Dost thou hear ?”

“Ay, sir, —and understand. Give me the dagger.”

“You must kiss it in my hand.”

“It may not be—you *suspect* me ? I will never be the liegeman of a *suspicious* master.”

“There, sir, *THERE* is the dagger—take it !” said our magnanimous hero.

On receiving it, Fornham fell upon one knee—took off his hat—raised the poniard to his lips—kissed it—then raised it up in the full moon light, and swore, that “in death as in life, he was the *SLAVE* of Reginald Cranmer :” and he returned it, even gracefully, into the hands of his master. It was with difficulty that Reginald refrained from embracing the man, who seemed to stand in need only of this *sparkling* opportunity to prove that his wayward habits had been the result rather of society than of principle.

“Enough,” said Reginald ; “I should be even baser than Silvertop, if I had one lingering particle of doubt of your *fidelity*. This crowns the most anxious and even feverish day of my life. Let us part, to meet betimes to-morrow.”

“Sir, a thousand good nights,” said Fornham, and withdrew.

Reginald took another turn or two, alone, literally for the sake of breathing awhile, and collecting his scattered thoughts, and quieting his agitated heart, when Crane came forward, and gently said, “Your pardon, sir; but I just wished to see how matters were, and in particular whether you possessed a whole skin; as I was watching at the end of the lower terrace to come forward in case of alarm.”

“Thank you, my honest fellow, but all is well; and Fornham has gone beyond himself in fidelity and devotion to my cause. It is time for us both to think of our night-caps. Be stirring in my room by eight o’clock:” and Crane took his departure.

But there was no *sleep*—there *could* be none—in the eyes of Reginald Cranmer. The church-clock struck one, two, three—and our hero was awake to count the hours. Then began to break the dawn of day: and then the sun rose, and the birds warbled in the fruit trees in the garden. Everything was chirping, alive, and awake.—Why should not ~~HE~~ he? He sprang from his bed—undrew the window-curtains—gazed down upon the spot which he seemed to have just occupied with Fornham, and taking out a small telescope, which always

travelled with him, he turned it in the direction of FURSTENHOFF CASTLE, situated upon a high hill, of which, as the house commanded a fine view, he fancied he saw the turrets beginning to glitter from the increasing lustre of the sun. The gilded vanes first caught the morning light: then the grey sides began to grow yellow and warm: and then the black flinty rock upon which the building so proudly stood. Below, the forest was involved in one deep, dark green tint: above which small patches of floating clouds, in pink and purple, seemed to rise higher and higher, and to catch the rays of light, till the whole mass appeared as one blazing canopy of ruby and gold. At that precise moment, the sun did indeed to Reginald's eyes look "like a giant rejoicing to run his course."

How could he close his eyes, or calm his thoughts, with so much grandeur before him! How dull, vapid, and unproductive seemed to be the ordinary repose of the morning!—and what might not be done before human beings had quitted their beds! Yet where, and how? A long, trying, if not desperate, day was before him—and he began to feel as well as to think of what he had endured on the preceding morning—harrowed by the conflicting agonies of the gaming table! Was he *free* from them even now? He was *not*; but he had taken *leave* of them, solemnly and for ever. He

entreated Heaven, not only to witness this sacred avowal, but to spare him to make *those* witnesses and partakers of the benefits resulting from his forbearance, whom he had left behind in his native land. "His Caroline has rescued him from the yawning gulf into which he was about to be precipitated. Could he think of her and prize her too much? Was she not beyond all the worth of the united mines of Golconda and Peru? And his dear mother—and sisters—and his incomparable uncle! They should all find that he could *act* as well as *talk*." The result of this searching soliloquy was, that Reginald, almost mechanically, drew his window-curtains back again—sought his bed—and immediately and insensibly sunk into a deep refreshing sleep of upwards of five hours. Crane had been too sensible of his master's late agitated state of nerves to attempt to enter the bed-room till the bell rang—on hearing which, he made his appearance; and, to his infinite gratification, found his master full of spirits, and in the most communicative humour imaginable. The first thing, on coming down stairs, was to write a cheque for about fifty pounds sterling, which Crane was to take to his bankers: and with forty pounds of it, to seek out the lodgings of the man with whom the miniatures were left in pledge for precisely that sum. But the gambler had *lent* them to be copied by an

artist resident at Baron C * * 's. "Would he accompany Tom Crane to recover them?"

"Leave your money, in the first instance," said the whiskered shark; "and we'll talk about it?"

"Not at all," said Crane, resolutely; who, to say the truth, had equal shrewdness and courage. "When you give me the valuable consideration, here are the ducats."

The gambler necessarily did not care a sou for the paintings, and surlily accompanied the valet to the Baron's. The artist was out. "When would he come in, and might the visitors go up stairs?"

"Certainly not, in his absence;" and Crane very coolly returned to the *Waldhorn*, and reported the result to his master.

"Thus it is," said Reginald, "that one false step leads to another, and that there is no end to the labyrinth of measures to be taken in consequence. I am quite easy about the final result, as my antagonist will necessarily prefer current coin to Pettitots and Lelys." A message came to require his immediate attendance at the *Chargé d'Affaire's*. The King had heard of the success of his cause, and he must dine with his Majesty, and meet the *Chargé* there, together with sundry grandees. Reginald would have gladly whisked the message, and perhaps the messenger too, out of window; for it was of most essential importance that all his measures for

“assault and capture” should be put in order long before sunset, and Fürstenhoff was a good eleven English miles distant. Another message from the bankers: he was wanted immediately. A third from the préfet: he must come and identify the wounded Peezenfeezer. What should our hero do?—and here was chapter the first of “*l’embarras de richesses*.” Reginald would deliberately offend no man, in word or deed—but he must as deliberately run the risk of offending his Majesty, by *not* obeying his command; for it was impossible for him, with the ulterior object in view, to dine at the palace, and set off for Fürstenhoff Castle on the same afternoon. He went to the *Chargé*; and requested that his Majesty might be made acquainted with the particular engagement of the evening.

“It may be worse for you if you do *not* go,” said Mr. * * * the diplomatist in question.

“How can this be? The King is a man of sense and of kind consideration.

“But you are at Stuttgart, where the King is supreme governor! Think twice.”

Reginald thought *thrice*; and said he would go. —“You are right. The King is a good-natured man, and is English all over.”

“And so am I,” again said Reginald, shaking hand with the *Chargé*.

In this dilemma, there was no man who could

render him such effectual assistance as Fornham. He sent for him ; and after telling him how matters stood, in regard to the miniatures and the royal dinner, requested his frank and deliberate advice. " The former need not give you a second thought ; for look—here they are !" taking them out of his pocket. In the hurry and warmth of the moment, Reginald seized upon them with both hands, and pressed them vehemently to his lips. " Caroline ! Jemima ! You are both here—never again to be separated till my return ! Thanks, thanks ! But tell me—"

" The tale is short, natural, and villainous enough," replied Fornham ;—" the scoundrel to whom your antagonist trusted these pretty gems, happened to be both a rogue and a poor fellow ; and he flew out, on the first opening of the pawnbroker's shop this morning, to convert them into cash : and *what* do you think he sold them for ?"

" Perhaps twenty sovereigns ?"

" Ten !—only ten : and I have *redeemed* them at that price. They are yours for ever."

" Call Crane immediately," said Reginald. On his appearance, he was requested to refund the ten ducats to Fornham, and to proffer only *thirty* to the scoundrel who had parted with them. The valet flew to execute his master's orders ; but the gambler insisted upon *forty* as the stake played

for. Reginald sent word that under no consideration should he receive more than *thirty*, as he had already paid ten to get them out of pawn. Still the "whiskered shark" refused, and even swore to be revenged.

"My good sir," said Crane to him, very composedly, (having a *lacquais de place* for an interpreter,) "my master won't be humbugged in this way; and he has as good a pair of hands to *defend* himself, as you have to *attack* him. One good shake of his muscular arms would prevent you from lifting a queue for a fortnight. Here are the thirty pieces: take, or leave them." The man, in the deepest tones of utterance, sputtered forth curses innumerable upon the Englishman's head; and growled and grunted as he put the pieces into his pocket.

Here, therefore, was victory *the first*: such as it was—and a very important one to the agitated nerves of our hero, who immediately sallied forth for the bankers. All the partners had a close conference with him in an adjoining room; and pressed upon him the prompt execution of the Court's decree.

"This very night, gentlemen, I purpose carrying that decree into effect; but I have a command from the King to dine with him."

"That is unlucky; but you must contrive and leave earlier than the rest. Remember, our car-

riage, as before, is at your service ; only you must let a courier, with an appendant court-seal and stamp, be among your attendants."

Reginald felt exceedingly grateful, and then entered into long and particular details about the final transmission of the money, which could not fail to be safe under the government guarantee.

" Draw for as much as you think you shall want to take you home, for afterwards you can receive nothing till the final order comes from England, which will justify us in giving you full credit for the whole at the banking-house of Messrs. Hammersleys and Co."

Reginald thanked them, and begged they would put by two hundred pounds to his credit.

He had scarcely time to dress for the royal dinner, when the *Chargé* called for him in his carriage at the *Waldhorn*, and both rattled away in the utmost spirits for the palace—a palace that has been often described, but which we need only say seems almost too magnificent for the dominions of its master.

There were two individuals in this drama who felt a more than ordinary anxiety to extricate Reginald Cranmer from the seductive luxuries of a royal table: and those were Fornham and Tom Crane. Indeed the latter seemed to be miserable as the clock struck eight ; for it was high time to be setting out for the Castle. He made his way

direct for the palace; saw the under-porter, the upper-porter, the under-valet, the upper-valet, the steward, the master of the kitchen, the groom of the chambers, the secretary, and the lord-in-waiting.

“Was there a possibility of getting Mr. Cranmer away?”

“The King has not risen. It is impossible.”

“His apartments are on fire!”

“That is not my fault.”

“His property will be plundered.”

“I shall have none of it.”

“His passport is in jeopardy.”

“Ha! that is another thing—and his Majesty will sign a new one.”

“Let it be so instantly—for every minute is precious.”

“I go”—but the King was leaving the dinner-table; and on passing from one room to another, Reginald saw his anxious servant, who seemed to beckon to him with every limb, member, and muscle of his body. He approached the King. “There was great need of his immediate attendance at the *Waldhorn*.”

“And so there is *here*. I cannot part with you.”

“Your Majesty is, perhaps, not aware that I am this evening to take possession of the Castle of Fürstenhoff?”

“Go, sir, and God prosper you: be sure you

let me know the result to-morrow. My Chief Justiciary has all the papers in readiness to put the final seal upon the wax."

Reginald bowed lowly, and disappeared.

Scarcely two minutes sufficed to bring him and Tom Crane to the hotel, where Fornham was in attendance with the loaded pistols, which he had not long before brought for the acceptance of Reginald. Our hero changed his dress, and leapt into the bankers' carriage, which had been waiting upwards of an hour for his conveyance. He was surprised to see a sabre hanging at the left side of the postilion, and the courier armed with a brace of pistols, having a horn, forming a semicircle, slung behind him. It is an odd characteristic in some human minds, that what seems to give evidence of approaching danger, heightens courage. There is always glory in victory—upon however limited a scale; and the whole party left the hotel as if they were the Hannibals and Cæsars of old. The night was singularly calm, and even hot. The horses were fresher than heretofore. Within two hours they stopt at a neighbouring lodge, prepared to receive them, and the horses were conducted to a stable. The Castle of Fürstenhoff stood on the side facing the assailants, upon what might be called a precipitous ravine; for there was scarcely twelve feet between the brink of the ravine and the castle walls.

They all looked and listened. The warder blew a long blast. It was answered by the horn of the courier, in a most singularly wild and lengthened manner. Another blast from the warder—" *Tone, tone, taverne ; tone, tone, tone, taverne, tone !*"—sounds, which would have echoed wildly and sweetly in the ears of old Randle Holmes, had he been alive and present to hear them.

"It is well," said the courier ; "they understand us, and know the object of our visitation. We are sure of a proper welcome. Look, gentlemen, and you will soon see some Bengal lights upon the battlements."

They all looked—Reginald being almost beside himself ! A shot was then fired—then another—but it either did not reach them, or passed over their heads. The whole battlements were then in one vivid blue flame, presenting, to the astonished eyes of the spectators, on the parapet, a huge figure of a man, scarcely less than seven feet high, armed with a large knotted club, and having his hair quite embedded and surmounted by oak leaves. His habiliments were scarlet ; and his chin was entirely sunk in a short black curly beard. He walked to and fro in a very agitated manner ; now shook his club—now poised it—and now flourished it over his head, as a boy would his cricket bat.

"Ha !" said the interpreter, "that is the mighty

Mozendodoch ! He is with us—for he has not yet assumed the kimboo-air of defiance. See, how tranquilly he now reposes on his club !”

“ A very *Farnese Hercules*,” remarked Reginald; “but let us on—on, is my word of attack and defiance. Where are the miscreants and damnable desperadoes who dare intercept our advance ?”

“ Here, here, in fierce and firm array,
We wait the issue of the fray !”

responded three voices ; a treble, a tenor, and a bass.

“ It is well,” said the courier ;—“ Fornham, Crane, and I, must shew you the way.”

The voices continued, but fainter and fainter ; and the singers were evidently receding. The assailants pursued, steadily and resolutely. In a moment, and in spite of a full moon, the adjacent ground seemed to be all in a blaze of preternatural light—for up shot three enormous rockets, followed by roman-candles and maroons. The warder repeated the welcomed “ *tone, tone, taverne!*”

“ It is fairy land—and yet no shot fired,” said Reginald ;—but three instantly succeeded :—for the fireworks marked out the assailants to the eyes of Silvertop’s gang. The first shot struck the horn which was slung at the courier’s back, and after shivering it the whole length, took fortunately a direction from the individual who wore it. The

officer of the court was also struck in the upper part of the arm ; but away they all pressed onward, Mozendodoch from the parapet cheering them on to victory ! Then, with one enormous stride, he pointed to a spot to which the defenders had betaken themselves to reload. Fornham was in advance—with a pistol in each hand. He heard a rustling in the shrubs, close to the right of him, and the unobstructed moon-beam presented to him a man, groping upon all fours, as if to wait till he should pass.

“ Demon of damnation ! ” shouted he, “ thy hour is come ;—and Fornham’s hand shall requite thee for all the misery thou hast inflicted upon him ! ” He pulled the trigger, but the pistol missed fire. Silvertop rose up, and levelled his pistol in turn ;—but his courage and presence of mind forsook him, as if by magic—the shot escaping at an angle of forty-five. Fornham moved three paces forward with the other pistol ;—Silvertop fled—and just as he was brushing the very brink of the deep ravine, the fatal bullet penetrated his heart, and he fell dead, and heavy as lead, below ! Then the giant-porter laughed aloud,—and the warder echoed a “ tantivy ! ” The blue lights were in a blaze again,—and three blasts of trumpets from the three officers of the court within, announced to the assailants that all opposition had ceased.

The entry into the Castle was as peculiar as magnificent. Mozendodoch had taken his station between the drawbridge and the outer gate, with a pleasing expression of countenance, and a display of limb which might have frightened a legion of dwarfs. Below the drawbridge was a tremendous chasm, with fir, and larch, and birch creeping out of the interstices of a granite rock. Again the warder sounded his "*Tone, tone, tavern*" notes—the trumpeters blew a merry blast—the porter "shook his ambrosial curls" as he bent his body—and a warm, as well as a ready reception, awaited the assailants. A shower of victorious rockets rushed upwards to the sky—and rarely was joy more general and more cordial. Two men, clad in the royal livery, waited upon Reginald.

The table was spread with a simple but nourishing repast; while Fornham, Crane, and the attendants, were comfortably housed below.

"Thank God!" said the former to the latter, "these hands have been instrumental, in my own defence, to the destruction of the most finished miscreant in the universe. Crane, even *you* know not one-half of the catalogue of his iniquities!"

"Let him rot, for vultures and kites," said Crane, in a manner gnashing his teeth. "The revenge of my sister is complete, hurrah!"—and they devoured the provender, and quaffed the "blud-redde wine."

On entering the Castle, Reginald eagerly enquired for the staircase of black marble, and the hall of porphyry and scagliola—which had made such a lively impression upon him from his uncle's narrative.* He was told that he would go up the marble staircase in his way to his own sleeping-room; and the hall would be better seen at day-light. Another mellow note from the warder's horn—as a signal for departure to rest. It was, indeed, most essential and opportune for Reginald; who, seizing a small lamp, was about to call for Crane, but an aged, seneschal-like looking man came gravely forward, and said, that it was *his* office to conduct all strangers to the cedar bed-room; and he walked gently upon his toes, following Reginald at the distance of three steps, as he ascended the staircase.

“How grand—but yet how desolate!” said our hero, as he mounted.

“Yonder, sir, is your room. Be pleased to take this key: it is of silver, and on retiring to rest, you will lock your door.”

“How now?” said Reginald; “have you spirits that walk at midnight?”

“None but such as are composed of flesh and blood like ourselves,” replied the seneschal; and bowing, he retired below.

* See vol. i. p. 25.

The bed and the hangings, and the whole room, had an air of mystery about them. There were panels of tapestry—as old as of the time of Maximilian II. ;* but in a very tender and even tattered state ; and the room had a most extraordinary echo. The first word pronounced by Reginald would be necessarily “*Caroline!*”—and the echo repeated it thus—“*Car, Cary, Carey, Caroline, Carolina.*” Reginald started—but on giving a loud “hem,” a half dozen “hems,” broke forth—which in consequence kept his lips hermetically sealed. He had hardly strength to undress himself ; and he sunk upon an eider-down bed, which almost hid him from vision. The quilt was especially soft—thick, and composed of the same materials. Reginald took no care to lock his door—nor was there any occasion ; for neither ghost, nor goblin, nor sylph, nor spectre, invaded that tranquil region. He was once or twice restless during the night ; and, as he told the seneschal afterwards, he fancied he heard the crossing and clashing of swords ; but he was evidently dreaming of the duel which had been fought hard by, by Peezenfeezer and his uncle, as narrated in the first chapter of this work. Crane came to him at nine ; but he was still fast asleep. The valet drew aside the window-curtain, and gazed

* A.D. 1560.

abroad upon the magnificent landscape before him. The sun seemed to be merry in the heavens. Then he surveyed the room, while his master was sleeping soundly. A picture—a *portrait*—was over the mantel-piece.

“Sure,” said Crane, “I *know* that face?”—He did, indeed; for it was the face of Reginald’s LATE FATHER; bearing his name and the date of his death, in the back-ground. Crane started—and in a sort of suppressed scream, ran to the bed-side, and hallooed out—“Sir, sir, your father wants to speak with you!”

“My father!” said Reginald, jumping up, and fancying himself to be in a dream—

“Yes, sir, your father,” doggedly continued the valet. “There—there!” and in a trice Reginald planted himself before it. He clasped his hands: “it is, it *is*, indeed: and how *like*!”

The joy of Reginald was unbounded. Could he possess the picture? He dressed himself with great rapidity, looking on all sides, and particularly upon the magnificent view which presented itself from the window. On descending, the whole establishment was drawn out, as in regimental order, to receive him. It was quite a unique thing. After breakfast, the officers of the court and of the King attended him as he walked to the box which contained the parchment and the ducats. The key,

presented him by Peezenfeezer* was worth nothing. A huge padlock was fastened to a huge iron chest, of which the confidential servant of the chief justiciary possessed the key. He applied it; the lock divided, the lid was removed; and at the top of the papers was a human hand, wasted to a skeleton. It rested upon the words—"GUARD WELL;" illuminated upon vellum. Reginald was in extacies! "I will indeed guard thy precious treasures well and truly, my ever honoured and dearest father. But whose hand—"

"Hush!" said the seneschal, "you must never repeat that question. The treasures are yours."

"*Yours*," rejoined the echo.

Reginald, for a short space of time, was utterly speechless; and falling on one knee, and raising his right hand to heaven, exclaimed with intense earnestness, so as to cause every eye to be rivetted to his expressive countenance, as he spoke—"Verily there is a reward for the righteous; verily there is a God that judgeth the earth." He rose, and requested to be taken to the hall of scagliola and porphyry.

The seneschal preceded. "*Here*," said the old man, "was the memorable ball; *there* sat all the beauty and all the rank of the neighbouring country.

Upon *that* peg your uncle's sword was hung, when he waltzed with the Countess Schleizer; in yon balcony sat the fine instrumental band which played our popular national airs; and across yon windows the lightnings flashed and glared, as your uncle was called out to the duel. But it is very hot; and the heavens are getting murky. You had better spend the whole day with us, as the Messrs. Blinktofft's will be coming after you, and expecting to view our walks and curiosities."

"I desire nothing better," said Reginald; "for indeed, my good friend, I am still exceedingly wearied as well as excited; and it seems to me that we shall have a stiffish storm at sunset." The heat was indeed becoming intolerable; and though a marble dado must, if anything, keep a room cool, yet there was absolutely no air; and, calling Crane, Reginald made as if he would stroll in a neighbouring orchard. "We should have Mrs. Thimbleton here"—said he, as Crane, after carrying a chair, placed it for him to sit upon. Reginald requested F'ornham might be sent for; and he appeared within five minutes. "F'ornham," said his master, "I am at this moment quite overcome with heat and lassitude—see, there was a sharp flash of lightning!"

"You will get it gloriously, sir, towards night: for the present, the sun will get the mastery; but

the very air is impregnated with sulphurous particles."

"A distant peal of thunder—another vivid flash!" added Reginald.

Fornham sat upon the trunk of a prostrate tree, when Reginald thus addressed him:—"I am infinitely gratified by the exertions of last night, and by your unequivocal proofs of even the most heroic devotion. Accept my thanks; and here, wear or keep the dagger for ever, with which, two evenings ago, I might have wounded your feelings. The handle is solid silver; and I believe there is a real ruby at its extremity, of no mean value. Keep it for my sake. Now let us retreat, for I am sure the storm is coming on at a great rate. What a peal!—and what a flash!"

"A word only, sir," said Fornham, "and then let the elements commingle as they may. I receive your poniard with even more gratitude than delight; and I kiss the blade, fearlessly, for I will never use it but in the cause of honour and justice—which are *sure* to be found where MR. CRANMER resides. The wretch who wrote you an anonymous letter, signed VERAX,* is no more. If these hands have done nothing else, they have at least laid *that* monster low." Fornham then raised the poniard up, and as it met his lips, he received a smart electri-

* Vol. ii. p. 87—8.

cal shock from its coming in contact with another flash of lightning. For a few moments he was bewildered, if not staggered ; but he recovered and followed his master within. As they reached the Castle, a few large heavy rain-drops fell. "It is indeed *beginning*," said Reginald ; "and what a coincidence !—only this will be a *day* storm."

"Meantime the rapid heavens rolled down the light."*

DRYDEN.

and a thick hazy mist enveloped the lowering woods ;—silence reigned every where ;—nor lowing Cattle nor chirping birds were heard. Both animals and human beings seemed to breathe with difficulty. The clouds thicken more and more, and descend lower and lower, so as almost to conceal the castle's pinnacles. It is an Egyptian darkness, which may be felt. In an instant—sharp, stunning, and terrible as the simultaneous discharge of a whole park of artillery—

"Leap'd the live thunder !"

preceded by what might be called streams of fire and forked lightning. The entire heavens were in a broad blaze ; and to the curious, penetrating eye, it should seem as if a "third heaven" were in view. Down fell the sheeted rain, and the wind rose, and earth and sky seemed to be so mixed up

* "Vertitur interea cœlum."—VIRGIL.

together, that you might despair of ever seeing them apart.

“I like the rocking of these battlements!” said Reginald, quoting the language of Zanga,* as he planted himself at the window, and gazed upon the conflicting elements without.

For scarcely less than three hours the thunder rolled, and the lightning raged, and the rain tumbled in torrents ;—then came the calm ;—then succeeded the sweet, crisped fragrance from herb, and fruit, and flower—sweet, even to lusciousness! It was impossible to continue within doors : and Reginald walked in the flower garden, and inhaled, even to tears of delight, the inexpressible aromatic freshness and pungency of every surrounding flower, shrub and herb. The day passed profitably, in all senses, to our hero, and towards night he sought the flower garden. And oh ! how perfect his visual happiness, as, on the second night of her wane, he saw the moon rise and occupy the high heavens, in a sky of unclouded depth of blue tint, with the fruit-tree tops tipped with her silvery rays, and with the groves re-echoing to the warbling of nightingales. “Such a NIGHT,” said he, “should never be succeeded by DAY. Ah ! if Caroline only were here !”

* The ‘Revenge,’ by Dr. Young.

CHAPTER III.

HOMeward BOUND—AN UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE
—ARRIVAL OF REGINALD CRANMER AT THORN-
BOROUGH ABBEY.

THE excessive severity of the storm prevented the arrival of the Messrs. Blinktofts' at Fürstenhoff Castle ; and on the succeeding day Reginald Cranmer prepared himself to take a final adieu of that picturesque and mysterious residence. The first object of his heart was necessarily the security of his property:—the officers of the court, who had knocked off the padlock and exhibited the contents of the iron chest, now secured the lid by three large waxen seals of government, the golden ducats being conveyed to the Stuttgart Bank. Upon the whole, absolutely and prospectively, this property might be worth fourteen thousand pounds sterling. Next to this was the HAND, and especially *the portrait of his father*.—Might he possess the latter? There could be no doubt of it ; and it accompanied our hero in the carriage to Stuttgart.

No conquerer could have entered a capital with brighter laurels round his brow than did Reginald on his return from the FURSTENHOFF VICTORY. The city had got an intimation of that return; while the postilion, courier, attendants, with Fornham and Crane, had their hats encircled by oak-leaves. The courier's horn was split in two by the bullet of the foe, or he would have blown such a note of victory as had never been before heard. A crowd assembled round the *Waldhorn*; and in compliance with its name, a large old *huntiny horn*, which had been rusting in a garret for the last half century, was taken down, and the courier almost cracked his cheeks by repeated efforts to make it sound. In a trice, Reginald was with his bankers, who exhibited the heartiest demonstrations of feeling on the result. Peezenfeezer had died on the preceding evening, of the wound received from his baronial antagonist; and Vesenmeyer had fled the Suabian territories. Thus, on all sides, the sun broke out gaily, promising a long and happy day of unclouded prosperity.

“HOMEWARD BOUND!”—said Reginald, on rushing out of the *Waldhorn*, and giving Crane distinct orders about commencing the preparations for departure. Within the hour Reginald called on his bankers, the *Chargé d’Affaires*, and his Majesty; necessarily only writing his name in the latter case.

He bounded from the *trottois* to the *chaussé*—and from the *chaussé* to the *trottois* again—in all manner of rectangular directions. Thus etherial, he met the sculptor Dannecker, and seemed breathless as he gave a rapid sketch of the adventures of the last evening but one.

“It is too complicated for sculpture,” observed Reginald; “or, now that I am a rich man, I might give you an order.”

“Suppose,” said Dannecker, in a quiet, mirthful manner, “you exchange the *many* for the *few*; and instead of a bustling and fierce group of *combatants*, you confine yourself to the head of the *commander-in-chief*?”

“I understand you,” replied Cranmer, “you wish to *bustify* me?”

“Precisely so.”

“But I am off to-morrow;—off, on the wings of an heroic and unconquerable attachment! Perhaps you could take Miss Ponton’s head at the same time?”

“May I ask how long that lady has resided in this city?”

“Ever since I have!”

“Her residence?”

“Here, in MY HEART!” shouted the conquerer.

Dannecker necessarily set that conquerer down as one possessed!!

Reginald Cranmer sought his hotel. A dozen

cards and messages were waiting his arrival. "HOMEWARD BOUND!"—were the first words which again escaped him. "Crane, my writing-desk. Have you ordered the best dinner which the place can afford?"

"It is ordered, sir."

"Ask whom you will to partake of it. I dine with Messrs. Blinktofft. Where is Fornham? Let him sit at the head of the table, and you at the bottom. Ask a dozen, if you like. My writing-table."

Crane brought the writing-table, and Reginald wrote as follows:

"Stuttgard, June 30.

"MY DEAREST MOTHER,

"Every object has been accomplished, and I quit here to-morrow, taking Paris in my way back. Assure Caroline and my uncle of every kind feeling and of every grateful emotion. I shall write again, when at the *Grand Hôtel des Colonies*; whither tell Caroline, and tell yourself, to direct all letters. God bless every one of you.

"R. C."

He had scarcely dispatched the letter, when Fornham rapped at the door, and entered

"Will you allow a word, sir?"

"A hundred."

"I hope, Mr. Cranmer, that you will permit me

to take the *bottom* of the table. Crane is your representative: I am not."

"Settle it between yourselves: and now, tell me what are your ulterior designs?"

"Alas, sir! I can have only *one*, which is worth thinking upon, and worth putting into practice. Is the door to be for ever shut against me, in my native village?"

"I would hope not: indeed, I should say not. We will have a meeting on my return; and do you accompany Crane with me to England; where you will be in immediate communication with us. You have rendered me a most essential piece of service in the part taken the other night, and I am not in the habit either of forgetting, or of not rewarding."

Fornham bowed low, and almost rushed out of the room—his eyes moistened by tears.

Reginald scarcely knew what object to attack next: but the *miniatures*—the dear miniatures—were they quite safe? Yes—in their pristine purity. They shall travel in the writing-case. A messenger from Court:—

"Mr. Cranmer is commanded to dine with his Majesty to-day, at the palace."

"Mr. Cranmer can't come, won't come:" said Reginald to himself. Tom Crane made his appearance.

“ Sir, the messenger from the King waits your reply.”

“ Tell him he shall have it in five minutes—but that I am overwhelmed, absolutely and positively overwhelmed, by a thousand points of business to attend to on my departure. *I won't go.*”

“ Consider, sir,” said Crane, “ before you determine so abruptly. His Majesty has been very kind to you during your stay, and will probably facilitate your departure?”

“ *I will go* ; bring my writing-desk.” Cranmer took a stamped or encadred piece of paper, and wrote as follows :

“ DEAREST CAROLINE,

“ Expect me under the church-yard wall—whence I caught your farewell look—within a fortnight : but you shall hear again when I get to Paris.

“ Ever the same,

“ Affectionately,

“ R. C.”

Unconscious of what he had written, he folded the note up very formally, using an envelope of larger size, and shedding upon it half a stick of red wax. He sealed it, and gave it to the messenger : adding, you dine “ at six ?” The messenger, grumbling somewhat, departed, and presented the note into the hands of the groom of

the chambers. In three minutes it was in the hands of the King: who jumped back nearly a yard on encountering the address of "Dearest Caroline."—"Comment donc, l'homme est fou!"

The groom of the chambers quite startled at the loud laughter with which his Majesty concluded the reading of the note.

"This is excellent—most excellent—and we will have fine fun with it when Mr. Cranmer arrives."

He arrived somewhat later than the rest of the company, and was quite "shocked at his bad breeding." But it was inevitable. He scarcely knew whether he had a head upon his shoulders.

"It is natural and pardonable," said the King, who shook him very cordially by the hand. "I hardly knew," continued he, "whether or not to expect you, as you have not answered my invitation."

"Excuse me, sir, but I *did* answer it, and put it into the hands of your Majesty's messenger."

"Are you quite sure of that?"

"Quite sure."

"Would you recognize the note if you saw it again?"

"Assuredly, sir." The King shewed him the superscription of the note.

"That is my writing, sir."

"And perhaps the *contents* are yours?"

Reginald opened—stared first at the scription, then at the King—struck his foot upon the carpet—and was preparing for a submissive and elaborate apology, when the whole circle (to whom his Majesty had previously communicated the anecdote) burst into a loud fit of laughter—which, in the end, was responded to by the author of the note, as lustily as the rest. The King told that author, that, in spite of Miss Caroline, whoever she might be, he should claim the note as his own property. It was not often that monarchs were so addressed.

“You appear to love very tenderly in England?” said the King.

“Sire, when gentlemen are possessed of such a treasure as my Caroline, they cannot love *too* tenderly.”

They descended to dinner. A large party had been asked; and there were stars and ribands in all directions. His Majesty seemed in admirable spirits. A portrait of our late Princess Royal—the consort of his late father—was hanging before the eyes of Reginald; and the King noticed him looking at it. “You are at home, when you look at *that*, sir.”

“Precisely so, sir—and I have heard much of the original of *that*,” said Reginald, looking at the bust of the Duchess of Oldenberg, his Majesty’s late consort.

The King bowed. "Mr. Cranmer, I believe you now and then drink *toasts* in your country?" Reginald Cranmer bowed. "Suppose we drink long life and happiness to Miss CAROLINE ——"

"PONTON, sir; pray add Ponton."

"Miss Caroline Ponton: and do you drink what you fill, and fill as you love that amiable lady."

Reginald put his hands before his face; and the grand seneschal having, from a preconcerted signal, supplied him with a green glass, of very ancient date, of about the size of a moderate tumbler, he filled it with the real Johannisberg—stood up—and bowing to his Majesty and the company, pronounced the name of his beloved in a style of peculiar impressiveness. The company were struck with it. But it was the *end* of his potations. There was no getting rid of the joke, which was tossed about from side to side like a shuttlecock, and Reginald gave it more than one propelling stroke with his battledore. The papers of the following day all teemed with this joke—with some slight variations as to the lady's surname; she being called in one paper, Pontono—and in another, Pontona—in a third, Pontosa. In each notification, the "*Caroline*" was uniformly made "*Charlotte*."

On returning to the *Waldhorn*, Reginald found the fêted circle in a roar of laughter, and just came

in time to hear the *nine hurrahs* on the mention of his own name. What a day for his generous heart and bounding spirits! The King had toasted his Caroline, and a dozen thirsty throats were making the “welkin ring” with his own name. On sending for the master of the inn, whose name was *Schwapengrostete*, he desired his account to be made out, and bespoke his horses for the morrow. He then visited the chief of the passport department, and was much delighted to find him, by the express command of the King, prepared to endorse every necessary document for himself and his suite, on that very evening. As he was anxious only to reach Baden-Baden on the next day, he would not start before twelve—and there was the *Chargé* and old Dannecker to take leave of. As usual, let a man *do* what he will, there is always something *undone* on the eve of a departure; but here, the chief thing that was to be undone, were the headaches of Fornham and Crane, from the orgies of the preceding day. At length the whole travelling apparatus was got in readiness by the mid-day; and putting on the identical travelling cap which he waved round his head under the church wall, on returning Caroline Ponton’s farewell salute, Reginald sprung into the carriage, shouting aloud, “CAROLINE and THE KING!” There was a crowd collected round the door—and hurrahs and clapping

of hands accompanied the departure. "If ever England sent forth a brave gentleman," said Schwapengrostete, "Mr. Reginald Cranmer is one. I have touched upwards of a hundred golden ducats during his stay." This would be necessarily the *test* of an English traveller's "bravery."

They reached Baden-Baden to a late supper. The inn was excellent, and Reginald recognized more than one countenance which he had seen before. The news of the "Fürstenhoff victory" had preceded him; and even the "Caroline" anecdote. He was beset and besieged with visitors: some standing at the door, some looking in at the windows, and others congregated in the entrance-passage. He demanded to be freed from such visitors.

"My dear sir," said the master of the inn; "I cannot do an act of rudeness. I cannot turn people out of doors, when they behave quietly within. See what it is to have a NAME, Mr. Cranmer!"

"I wish I were without one," said he to himself, on retiring to bed. But he did not put his head upon his pillow without writing a hasty note to Caroline Ponton, to tell her that THE KING HAD TOASTED HER at dinner on the preceding day—enough to turn the brains of any but the object to whom that note was addressed. It was what is

called a heavenly evening: the sun had gone down to repose: but the north was still bright with its lingering rays. The sky began to be studded with stars, which shewed their twinkling fires. There was no moon—but the air was soft and fragrant. The walking minstrels were strumming their guitars or exercising their voices—and duets and trios sounded from different quarters. Their “twanging instruments” made sweet music, and were most soothing to Reginald; and as he walked in a lone spot, he breathed forth alternately the endeared names of the departed and the living: of Maria and of Caroline! In allusion to the latter, he began to quote the verses introduced in the second chapter of this work—

“Where’er I roam, whate’er I see,
My heart unfetter’d bounds to thee!”

Presently—as if from behind an adjacent thicket—the sequel was given from a well-known voice—

“Whate’er I see, where’er I roam,
My heart with thee still finds a home.”

“Mercy on us!” said Cranmer, “who have we got here?”

“It is the voice of Charles Ponton.”

“Ay, and of Marianne, his wife,” screamed the enraptured bride!

Reginald for a little minute could scarcely reco-

ver his breathing—pressing his sister mechanically; without being able to utter a syllable. At length he spake—

“Is it a vision or your own dear selves?”

“A vision,” truly replied Ponton; “but our own dear selves into the bargain. We obtained intelligence of all your proceedings, and heard that you would be here probably about this time. The newspaper of to-day, translated by my valet, made me acquainted with the very curious incident about my sister and the King of Wirtemberg. In spite of themselves, the Cranmers will be immortalized. It is my present determination to proceed on to Munich, and to come home by the Tyrol. Here is Marianne not yet tired of travelling”—

“Nor of her travelling companion,” archly replied the newly-espoused lady.

“My dear Charles, my happiness is almost supreme: were but Caroline here, it would be entirely so. Where is she—how is she?—when did you hear from her?—how did you leave her?”

“One at a time, my dear fellow. All shall be satisfactorily answered:” and Charles Ponton proceeded to give a methodical account of *both* weddings—Phoebe Crane’s and his own—“and of what betided thereupon,”—to the infinite delight of his auditory. At this moment, having reached the hotel. Crane came for travelling orders. It

was resolved that they should all spend one day—the following day—together. In short, there was such a flutter and elasticity of spirits among them, scarcely knowing how to direct either their conversation or their movements, that Crane could with difficulty collect their final determination. Presently, Fornham made his appearance, to the infinite astonishment, and even horror, of the newly-married couple. How deeply cutting is self-reproach, in a breast that is not *quite* blunted to all the honourable purposes of human nature! Fornham shrunk from the searching glance of Charles Ponton: but it was only an electrical shock of short duration, as he knew Reginald Cranmer would quickly lull all suspicion asleep. He retreated, having made a respectful bow to Mr. and Mrs. Charles Ponton. On his retreat, Reginald went into the history of his conversion.

They had well nigh sat up half the night as Reginald Cranmer entered upon the details of the Fürstenhoff victory. Was it real, or a romance? Did the narrator talk of fiction or of truth? Marianne could not refrain from again and again embracing him—"once for herself, once for her mother, and once for CAROLINE! But tell me, the *Pettitot miniature*—" Cranmer's countenance was in a hectic of excitement. Marianne repeated the inquiry. Cranmer stammered, then became mute.

A painful struggle with conscience was evidently going on !

“Have you lost it ?” said the unsuspecting Marianne.

“I *had* lost it, but have *found* it again ;” and Reginald made a great effort to rally and to balance himself. The frightful forms of the gamblers at Stuttgart, in phantasmagoria-fashion, seemed to rise and to rush across his vision ; but the struggle quickly subsided.

“It is packed up, my dear Marianne ; and I fear cannot be unpacked till I reach Thornborough Abbey : and besides, you may be likely to *lose* it on so long a journey as that which you meditate.”

“But I only wanted to *see* it—to see what sort of a thing I was, a hundred and fifty years before I was born. Is it *quite* inaccessible ?”

“We will try to-morrow,” replied Cranmer.

The morrow came—under a glowing canopy of unclouded sky. Yet were there a few cooling zephyrs stirring ; and the day promised to be as delightful abroad as it was happy within doors. Crane’s dexterity had contrived to get the miniatures from their place of confinement ; and on descending to breakfast, Marianne found *herself* upon her plate. She was in extacies ; nor was her husband less delighted.

“My dear Reginald,” said he, “tell us the *damages*?”

“I don’t know what you mean. I see no *damage* whatever upon the enamel.” He answered thus purposely, to pretend not to understand the question of Charles; who, comprehending it, and vexed at its abruptness, turned it off by keeping up the fiction, as—“No; there is neither speck nor damage about it. I fear my vision is getting dim in a strange climate.” He then fell to an unmeasured admiration of it—“How odd! How singular! How sweet! and if Marianne were not here, I should say, how *pretty*!” They then requested to look at the *Lely*. Cranmer drew it out of his side-pocket, and shewing it, added, “there is CAROLINE PONTON, as exhibited in the corridor of Dacre Hall!”

It was, indeed, a delightful morceau of art; and the trio seemed to contend with each other in terms of admiration, at its freshness of tint and exactitude of detail. Each repeated look only gave its possessor an additional stimulus to turn his face towards the original at Hasleby Park. He secretly chided the length of the day, although his happiness was pure and even overflowing, at this “UNEXPECTED RENCONTRE. “Where should they drive?”

“Anywhere—everywhere, so as we get through the day,”—said our hero to himself.

A fountain was in this spot—a cascade in that—a castle some five miles distant—a deep, dark forest yet farther. The horses went a round of some twenty miles, during almost the whole of which Charles and Marianne were entertaining Reginald with a most animated account of their “season in London;” and more particularly of Sir Benjamin Burridge’s ineffectual attack upon the heart of Julia. Reginald was rather astonished than amused at the latter; but the siege of Woodbine Lodge by his gallant uncle, seemed to give him infinite delight.

“He is the best of men; let him marry and ‘raise seed’ for the supply of another *Dacre Genealogical Tree*, when the parent shall have crumbled to dust!”—was the instinctive, generous burst of Reginald’s noble heart.

The morrow at length came; and the newly married couple and Reginald separated. As the latter kissed his sister, his hand was extended, at the same time, to clasp that of Charles Ponton.

The purest affections that warm and ennoble our nature, were all in full force during this separation. Each of their carriages was at the door: Crane chiding, in secret, the lingering farewell of his master. Away they went in opposite directions,

“Health in their frames, and gladness in their hearts!”

Within two months they were to meet again ; and how incomplete is present, without prospective, happiness ! Each was in full operation at the moment alluded to.

“ Straight for Paris,” said Reginald to Farnham and Crane ; and they arrived there by easy stages within five days. In returning by Strasbourg, and along the Alsatian hills, or the Vosges, Reginald’s heart danced with delight as he contemplated the ruinous castles which crown their summits. “ There is not one of them fit to compare with that of Fürstenhoff,” he would say to himself. He reached the *Grand Hôtel des Colonies* on the second day’s journey from Chalons sur Marne. “ My letters,” said he to Crane, on alighting from the carriage. “ Run to the post.”

“ But won’t you enquire here, in the first place ?” said he to his master.

“ Ah ! Monsieur Cranmer, que je suis ravie de vous révoir,” exclaimed the worthy landlady ; adding, “ ma fois, il y a une foule de lettres qui attend votre seigneurie,” and five letters were brought to him in a trice : two from Caroline, one from his mother, one from the Major, and one from the Squire.

“ Hurrah !” said he. “ Crane, attend to every thing. Shew me a room ; and don’t let any one (not even yourself) come near me for two hours”—

and he sought his sitting-room; beneath which, upon the lawn, a row of orange trees emitted a delicious fragrance. Reginald threw himself upon the sofa, and opened both the letters of his Caroline, to ascertain the priority of dates—but read only scraps of them in inverted order; first going to the one, and then to the other letter. It was impossible that he could have any consecutive idea of their contents—and yet he fidgetted and fussed with these two well-charged letters for upwards of an hour. The reader may be spared the notice of his frequent and violent exclamations during their perusal, and after laying them upon the sofa. By a strange phantasy, he would open Squire Ponton's letter before his mother's, simply because the writer was so *nearly connected* with the author of the preceding effusions.

He next broke the seal of his mother's letter; calling on Heaven to "bless the writer." Then the Major's. It was a very epistolary cornucopia of all manner of good news: health, ardent expectation, with the recital of "coming events," which seemed to "cast their shadows before." Caroline's letters were dashed with a few melancholy reflections, and anxious anticipations—which never fail to be the attendants of "true love;" but there was every thing to soothe and to satisfy—and it should seem as if every place were already "swept and gar-

nished" for the return of Reginald Cranmer to the home of his father. Crane entered.

"Had two hours elapsed?"

"They had—and an additional half hour."

"We must leave Paris to-morrow."

"Has anything happened at home, sir?"

"No, nothing; but I am tired of locomotion."

"Then had you not better *rest* awhile in this charming city?"

"No city is charming where Miss Ponton is *not*. Order the horses straight for Calais at ten to-morrow. Why do you stare and halt thus? Hasleby Park — Thornborough Abbey — dear old England! Away, away!"

"Mercy on us, sir, you are dreaming—and yet a little sleep would probably refresh you?"

"Indeed I am most wearied, and require it."

Reginald betook himself to a bed-sofa, and slept soundly for a good two hours. On awaking, Crane was summoned to attend him.

"We must rest ourselves here for three days at least," said the renovated traveller.

"Ay, sir, this is as it should be; but awhile ago you told me to prepare for departure on the morrow."

"I scarcely know what I said. Order dinner at six for myself only."

"I wish it were for *two*."

“And who would you make the *second*?”

“Can you doubt, sir?” and Tom Crane left the room in a most mirthful mood.

On the fourth day, Reginald quitted Paris; having dined with the ambassador on the third. He found that the Diane de Poictier's toilet-table had been packed off for England; and he prepared himself for a more important package in a magnificent bronze and gilt clock, the gift of his uncle—a beautiful and complete set of *Sèvres* for the dinner and tea-table, the gift of his mother—and some large mirrors, with two magnificent arm-chairs, the gift of his future father-in-law. His *own* superfluous cash was devoted to two watches, a gold chain, with a sort of miscellaneous *bijouterie* for the attirement of *one*—who in fact needed nothing of the kind to adorn beauty or to secure attraction. They left Paris on the fourth day, in the finest weather, and with every reasonable hope of reaching Hasleby Park within a week of starting.

I desire to ask the man—and especially the reader of these volumes—who has been absent from home, for the first time, some four months, whether, on the first glimpse of the “grey and battered sides” of the cliffs which encircle that *British home*, what may be—what positively is—the state of his feelings on the first contemplation of the chalk-ramparts of that country? But ere he answers, I must sup-

pose that country to contain, not only a mother and sisters, and an uncle, but also a BETTER-SELF!—or one, that is shortly to be cradled in the arms of honour and of affection. How leaps his heart, as his eye first catches the line of coast! How swells his bosom when, on planting his foot upon that coast, something tells him, that he walks upon the same soil, and is in a manner breathing the same atmosphere, with HER, who is far dearer to him than all surrounding objects—moral or physical: whom he treasures in the very depths of his memory—whom he worships with every pulsation of the heart's core—

“For her to live: for her to die:
Her partner in ETERNITY.”*

Reginald chides the steamer for its delay—and yet they plough the briny wave (“*spumas salis ære ruebant*”) at the rate of fifteen miles the hour. They land; and are off in a tangent. They sleep in London, and away they start, at six the next morning, for Hasleby Park. Reginald, at the distance of one hundred miles, fancies that he sees the grass-green hills that encircle his home. “Away! away! the postillion is slumbering, and the horses are at the plough’s tail!” Still they dart onward, at the rate of twelve miles an hour! The dust gathers

* See vol. i., page 35.

in rolling masses: the pebbles fly upward, and chafe the paint upon the panels. The inmates are almost hid from each other. At the distance of ninety miles, they stop and sleep: but sleep there is none—for Reginald Cranmer! Fornham and Crane are encrusted in dirt and dust. They betake themselves to an adjacent river, and plunge and paddle in its delicious coolness! They sleep soundly, and are with difficulty awakened the next morning at five: when the signal is again given for immediate departure. Away they go!

“Now—now I think I see the spire of the village church?” shouted Reginald.

“It is full twenty-five miles off, sir,” replied Fornham, touching his hat.

“The drones—how they creep!”

A noise of four horses, in a full swing trot, is heard behind; and on stopping at the turnpike, who should be the commander-in-chief of these horses, but Sir Benjamin Burridge? Mercy on us!—what salutations, what joyous interchange of generous sentiment! But the baronet, taking a road to the right, Reginald was liberated from his presence and his—dust. The baronet contrived, however, to importune the brother to “say every thing that was kind and generous to Miss Cranmer.” Fornham was then asked, if they had proceeded far enough to catch a glimpse of the spire?—that dear

spire, which should seem to have carried an electric spark to heaven on the funeral of the beloved Maria!* Reginald was told that a good fifteen miles must be encountered before they could get the slightest view of it.

“Add two horses, Crane, at our next relay—not for pomp or vanity’s sake, but for expedition’s sake.”

“I doubt if we shall go the faster?”

“Yes, yes—do as I tell you.”

They reached the last stage, and four horses seemed to fly with Reginald’s carriage to Thornborough Abbey. Still he chided: still they were “at the plough’s tail.”

“Now, sir, now!” said Fornham.

Reginald stood up on the fore seat, balancing himself, by putting his hands on the men’s shoulders. “It is—it *is*—as I live and breathe, the spire of the very church that canopies the tomb of my beloved Maria—God be praised!” He sat down, and was half choked with an excess of feeling which defies description. Then he thought he saw the whole family train, with the Major at its head, coming out to receive him. Next he fancied that Caroline had been taken ill, and could not join them...

* Vol. i. p. 317.

"Sir, sir!" said Crane, "I do think that I see Major Dacre's barouche in advance of us?"

Up jumped Reginald. It *was*, indeed, the identical barouche! They stop.

"Victory!" shouted the Major.

"Victory!" replied Reginald.

"No more, my lad, hasten on."

"To Hasleby Park?"

"No, to Thornborough Abbey; the Squire brought Caroline there this morning."

"Is she well? Is she *quite* well?—quite happy?"

"Not so happy as she will be in half an hour," replied the Major, sily; and off started Reginald.

"Sluggards and moles! how they creep!"

"This is at the rate of nearly fourteen miles an hour—that's all," said Crane, with a suppressed smile.

Now they near the church-yard wall. Somebody is waving a white handkerchief from the windows of Hasleby Park. It is the house-keeper; as desired by Caroline—to confirm an ancient promise. They are now fairly in the village: all dust and spatter! Every man, woman, and child, seems to be abroad. One long-continued deafening cheer from every open mouth, proclaims the arrival of the hero—and his approach to a second victory—in the arms of his beloved! Mrs. Cranmer

and Julia, with the vicar and curate, and the magistrate and the surgeon, are all on the steps to receive him. He is scarcely recognizable—begrimed in dust.

“Where is Caroline?”

“Awaiting you in Julia’s boudoir.”

He springs up the staircase: the door is left ajar: and Reginald and Caroline are the happiest of all happy human beings.

But this Elysium was quickly invaded. The voice and the hurried step of Major Dacre were heard.

“Reginald!” no answer. “What! Reginald, I say!” Still no answer; whereupon the assailant ran to the top of the staircase, and rapped at the door.

“Enter.”

“Down—down with ye, both! Here is Roger Payne, the mole-catcher and village poet, at the head of the whole village, bespeaking your instant attention to—”

“His horrible rhymes,” replied Reginald; “which, I wish, with ‘Roger the Rhymer,’ at the bottom of the Red Sea: but let us come, and at least *endure* what we hear.”

Never did a young lady so reluctantly consent to a proposal, which, it must be confessed, was not

a little *mal-à-propos*. Roger Payne sung, as Tibbetts played, the following homely verses:—

Now, Reginald, our hero's come,
And Silvertop laid low;
We'll welcome him unto his home—
For he's the cock to crow!

The merry bells shall shortly ring;
The village shew its pride;
When he MISS CAROLINE shall bring,
And claim her as his bride.

Then, lads and lasses, fall to work,
And welcome Cranmer home;
He's fought the foe like any Turk—
He'll fight all foes to come.

God bless the maiden! whose sweet face
Has wrought such wond'rous charms;
Who looks and speaks with such a grace—
Her home—in Cranmer's arms!

Three shouts followed! Caroline Ponton was obliged to hide her face upon Reginald's shoulder.

“Oh, day of bliss! to equal this,
Olympus strives in vain!”

shouted the Major; and he flung a handful of silver, with one or two sovereigns, among the scrambling crowd. The author of the verses, and Tibbetts, each received a golden remuneration at the hands of Cranmer.

CHAPTER IV.

RETROSPECTION. — THE RECONCILIATION. — THE
DACRE CRISIS.

WE have been whirled along so rapidly with our hero, in the preceding chapter, that we stand in need of a little repose before we cast our eyes upon scenery, events, and characters, as they have developed themselves since the return of Mrs. Cranmer from London. It is necessary to have that sort of repose which facilitates RETROSPECTION; and the reader will find that human nature, in its infinite varieties and vagaries, has not been quite stationary at our "sweet Auburn."

When Middleditch was twitting the two widows, Smithers and Sparks,* that it would be *their* turn next to visit the hymeneal altar, he was little aware of the exact state of things as carried on at the "Jolly Butchers." By what arts of witchery or necromancy it was that a very serious impression

* Vol. ii. p. 305.

had been made upon the bosom of the “godly monitor,” who usually administered his Sabbath comforts to Mrs. Sparks,—but who, now, was enacting the part of the “faithless shepherd” at the Jolly Butchers, I cannot take upon myself to determine ; but most certain it was, that the affections of the devourer of “Jerusalem artichokes,” and the “exponent of primitive Christianity,” had suddenly veered about in a very strange direction. Whether the artichokes had lost their flavour, or began to nauseate, as the “*toujours perdrix*,”—or, whether the mutton was less tender, or less skilfully cooked,—or, in the third and last place, whether as “salt will lose its savour,” the founder of these repeated feasts became less interesting, or less attached, certain it was, that our good and godly itinerant was now rarely a Sabbath guest at Mrs. Sparks. An incident served to fan a *spark* into a *flame*.

On returning from the tabernacle one Sunday morning, Mrs. Sparks—in the very *faintness* and anguish of disappointment on not finding the minister ready to attend her home—called at the “Jolly Butchers” for a little peppermint to recruit her spirits—indeed, to strengthen her sinking frame. She entered unexpectedly ; and, turning to the right, she observed a rapidly-retreating figure of a man, clothed in black, who, in the effort to reach a staircase which terminated in the room, fell over a

three-legged stool—and roared aloud from the severity of the fall !

“ Perfidious wretch ! ” exclaimed the blacksmith’s widow ; “ is it *thus* you reward me for all the pain and penance undergone on your account ?—Is it thus you requite a deeply-seated affection, which can be rooted out only with life ! Mr. Tramp ! Mr. Tramp ! I did not expect this of you ! ”—and so saying, she sunk upon an old tumble-down sofa, and burst into a wild fit of hysterics.

Mrs. Smithers was naturally attracted thither by the united roars of the one, with the lamentations of the other ;—but a RIVAL has no *sympathy*.

“ Mrs. Sparks might find her way out as she came in. There is the door, ma’am, and the sooner you retreat the better. Are you *much* hurt, dear sir ? ”—in a tender tone of voice to the sprawling minister.

But Mrs. Sparks was upon her legs in a moment. “ Yes, ma’am, there is your door, and never will I again darken the inside of your house by my presence, or my shadow. As for *you*, sir—why don’t you *speak*, you wretch ? ”

“ I have been bawling enough, I think : ” replied the man with black worsted stockings and Jero-boam hat ; “ some salve, my shin is broken ! ”

“ Salve for your *conscience*, you wretch ! ”

And Mrs. Sparks was just rushing out, when she

caught a glance of a leg of mutton roasting, and heard the servant say, on entrance, "Ma'am, the *artichokes* will be spoilt if they are not immediately taken from the fire."

"Ah! Mrs. Sparks!" ejaculated, in measured and cutting accents, the floored swain, "if you had now and then *roasted* your leg of mutton, matters had never come to this extremity! My vessel is moored here—for life."

"How! what? for *life*, say you? So quick, and so severe! What's here, that *my* larder cannot supply?"

"Come, ma'am, none of your slights of the larder at the Jolly Butchers," replied the opposing widow; "we roast, and boil, and fry, and stew—"

"Yes, and a pretty *stew* is sometimes made of it! *Here*, the plot was stewed for the depredations on Squire Ponton's preserves! Here, thieves run away with apothecaries' horses—and get shot through the head in consequence! A pretty *pandemonym* you all made of it! as my late poor dear husband used to say."

"Away!—out of my house!—out of my premises, you insolent baggage! Your abominable jealousy is insufferable. Can't Mr. Tramp have a slice of sweet mutton at any shop but *yours*?"

The black guest now stood up on his legs: and Mrs. Sparks, looking fiercely at both, snapped her

fingers, and said to the godly man, "Give me back the fifteen pounds that you borrowed, or Fornham shall poke you in the small ribs."

And she quitted the Jolly Butchers—but not before Mrs. Smithers assured him that "twice fifteen pounds was at his service, if requisite." Mr. Tramp never made so hearty a repast before.

Meanwhile, as the two egressing congregations from the parish church and the tabernacle met somewhere near this spot, Mr. Clutterbuck—seeing the agitated state of the retreating widow Sparks—naturally inquired what might have caused it?

"Oh, sir, there is nothing but desolation laid up in store for me. A wounded spirit who can bear?"

"Speak more particularly. Have you lost any one *dear* to you?"

"Dearer to me than life itself!"—roared out the stricken widow.

"And *who* may it be?—your mother, sister, brother? Speak."

"One, that I had supposed would have united himself in all the consoling and endearing ties of this world: My godly minister!"

"Is he dead?"

"Yes—ever—to *me*."

"For whom, then, does he live?"

"Oh, sir, name it not: a *wretch*: a publican and sinner; an encourager of plots to plunder half the

county : a very worm, in its slimy course, scarcely worth the treading upon. Oh !”

“ Name—name—my good woman !”

“ Spare me, Mr. Clutterbuck, that affliction ; you will pass by the ‘ Jolly Butchers ;’ *there* feeds and fattens the base wretch, who has won an affection only to treat it with ridicule and neglect. And this, at *my* time of life !!” She positively sobbed aloud, and sought her home ; as the stricken deer, in whose side the fatal arrow sticks, seeks the covert to pine and die.

Although Mr. Clutterbuck might be called a man of severe habits of thought and action, yet he could not resist the propensity to laughter which the extraordinary conduct of the widow Sparks provoked. To this, he had a little bit of curiosity to look into the “ Jolly Butchers,” *en route*, and to see how matters stood there. He saw the tabernacle-man in full feather—that is to say—in the full enjoyment of his mutton and Jerusalem artichokes ; the plate swimming in gravy ; a beaker of sparkling ale by the side of it ; and all things bestirring emotions of gratitude and thanksgiving towards his benevolent patroness. On seeing the magistrate, both the widow and her guest stood up, the latter looking as if he should like to creep under his plate.

“ I will not disturb you,” said the magistrate,

half jocosely ; “ but it should seem that the reverend gentleman has *two* strings to his bow ? ”

“ Yes, sir,” replied the ready widow, “ there is no lack of strings here ; for should one slip out of the shoe, I can furnish half-a-dozen.”

“ Have you seen Mrs. Sparks passing this way ? ” said Mr. Clutterbuck.

“ Yes, and heard her too,”—rejoined the widow ; looking as fiercely as if she could stick her fork into the ribs of that hapless lady as easily as she did into a large hunch of bread by the side of her.

But we must attend to *keeping* in our village-picture : Mrs. Partridge and Mrs. Peacock were now at deadly feuds with each other. In fact, the latter had, on more occasions than one, been “ weighed in the balance, and found wanting ; ” and to escape a severe mulct, which Mr. Clutterbuck, as magistrate, was determined to inflict upon her, she made the best of her way out of the village ; so that our worthy Partridge now ruled with an uncontrolled dominion. Never did human being exercise sovereignty with a milder sway. There were some terrible long-standing debts, for potatoes and flour, upon her books ; and our friend, the bass-singer, hight Middleditch, was a debtor to a considerable amount. Tibbets was, also, a good

deal on the wrong side of the hedge, in the matter of potatoes; but Reginald Cranmer was now come home; and the mole-catcher had told them that “*he* was the cock to *crow* !”*

The morning sun was shining in all its glory upon Mrs. Thimbleton’s orchard, and the ripening pippins were beginning to show their golden tint, when Fornham made his first general sally abroad. He walked calmly rather than confidently—as if conscious that there was much about him of an equivocal nature, which required clearing up with his late neighbours. It was decisive, that he could not pin his conversion upon a piece of paper, as ‘this house to let,’ in the front of his forehead; and therefore he sought to put out his ‘creepers,’ as it were, and feel his way, till a meeting of the *Magnates* of the parish should confirm his comparative worth:—such an object being immediately to take place.

“Is it you, Mrs. Thimbleton, that I see?”

“Sure it is, sir; and, in spite of your tanned face, you must be Mr. Fornham?”

“The same. I give you good day. You seem to have a rare crop of your favourite pippins.”

“Call ’em *golden*, sir; for they are most precious. Mr. Fornham, is it true what Tom Crane tells us?”

“What might *that* be?”

“That you saved Mr. Cranmer’s life, and shot Silvertop through the groin?”

“I know not, whether I saved Mr. Cranmer’s life; but certainly I took away the life of that miscreant Silvertop, in my own defence.”

“But, Mr. Fornham, was it through the groin?”

“I rather think *not*; but, on the contrary, through the heart.”

“Then he is sure to be dead: that’s one satisfactory thing. Jobson and Stubbins are transported for life; that’s another satisfactory thing. But are you coming to stay with us? How can the parish go on without a lawyer? And so you lived at *Stuttart*, with our young master—and got away the *Minotaurs* (miniatures) from the gamblers? Crane gives you a noble character for courage and for daring.”

“Thank Heaven!” said Fornham to himself; “here is an opening for reconciliation;” and the visitor walked up and down the gravel walk with the owner of the premises, giving a glowing, rather than exaggerated, description of what passed, touching the Fürstenhoff victory.

“But you will dine with me soon, I hope?”

At this moment, a strong, bold horse was seen galloping, rather than trotting, through the village, with a cart behind him—and a woman sitting

and screaming upon the seat—dropping her hands, and imploring for aid. Fornham rushed out of the orchard—planted himself before the horse—and, seizing the bridle, stopped him in a moment.

The sudden stoppage, or jerk, threw the woman head forward from her seat, into the arms of her deliverer; she had otherwise, in all probability, fractured her skull. She fainted away, and was conveyed to the “Queen’s Head.” Fornham carried her carefully up stairs, and laying her inanimate body gently upon a bed, seemed to quit the house abruptly; indeed, so abruptly, that he was not at all recognized.

The whole village quickly surrounded the Queen’s Head. Who was the killed creature? Who rescued her at the risk of his own life? Mrs. Clary, who kept the public house, put her head out of window, and screamed, “Send for the doctor, or poor Phœbe Cotton will otherwise be a corpse!” Away they all ran in different directions, as if a doctor was to be found at the termination of every direction.

“Phœbe *Cotton*! that must be Phœbe *Crane* that was!” said Fornham to himself; “thank God I have been instrumental to the saving of her life.”

Mr. Ruffham made his appearance—but Phœbe had recovered her senses—sat up in bed—and

thanked her medical visitor with a gracious smile, adding, "pray, Mr. Ruffham, let me know to *whom* I am indebted for the safety of my life?"

"That's more than I can say," added Mr. Ruffham; "but whoever he be, he merits all the good that you can say of him." And he left the house, the villagers huzzaing him as the preserver of Phœbe's life.

Frank Cotton, her husband, would necessarily be among the foremost in demonstrations of joy. The cause of the accident was simple enough. Frank had indulged Phœbe—in that excess of kindness which is pretty sure to exist during the first twelvemonth of the married state—with the horse and cart, under her own guidance, to pay some visits to a few neighbouring friends—business preventing the husband from accompanying her. The animal had had little or no work of late, and to say the truth, was a horse of rather too much mettle to be applied to homely uses. As Phœbe, reins in hand, was trotting smartly along—and nodding, right and left, in all the plenitude of pardonable conceit to her numerous neighbours—a little girl, named Ann Erith, with a red handkerchief tied to a stick, by way of a flag, came rushing out of a passage, and brandished it about, almost in front of the eager animal. The child escaped demolition by a miracle, but the horse

tossed up his head, snorted, and plunged forward with uncontrollable fury. We have recorded how the driver escaped.

But where was the deliverer? He had fled; he was invisible; and yet Mrs. Partridge thought he had passed her shop: "At least," said she, "a strange man, with a swarthy complexion, and hairy cap, just passed by here—in a great hurry, and with an anxious look."

But Fornham was not to be found. The *éclaircissement* was reserved for a more decided and favourable moment. As soon as Reginald Cranmer could concentrate his feelings, and views, and plans, the first impulse of his heart—having paid all debts of affection to his parents and relations (we have seen how those of *love* have been paid) would be, an effort to reinstate Fornham into the house and the business of his late master Silvertop. A council was called and held—at the magistrate's residence, to which both the clergymen (for Mr. Markham was now in residence) were invited; and no one displayed greater alacrity in attendance than the Major. Reginald opened the proceedings, and expatiated upon the heroism and devotion of Fornham at Stuttgart; giving a glowing description of the arts of Silvertop, first, to seize the remittance of £100, and afterwards to cheat him at a gambling-table, and oppose his entrance, if not rob

him of his life at the entrance to Fürstenhoff Castle.

Fornham was sent for. He made his appearance quickly, and presented himself before the parochial magistrates, with the air of a man, not unconscious of having done wrong, but conscious also of having endeavoured to atone for much which had been done amiss.

“He had been educated under the most subtle, and cold-blooded villain in Christendom. A catalogue of his enormities, past and meditated, would fill a little volume. The gentlemen were in possession of every circumstance connected with the toll-gate robbery ; and, although he could never sufficiently blame himself for *not* having disclosed the intended wrong, yet he seemed impelled by a fate which it were impossible to resist.”

“You are aware, sir,” said the magistrate, “that this is the fallacious reasonings of most people who commit crime?”

“I am, sir ; but it is, nevertheless, the statement of severe truth. You all know the fate of my poor father !” (Here Fornham paused a little, evidently striving to repress those gurglings of the throat which were pressing their way upwards.) “Even ~~HE~~—that unhappy man—taught me sometimes to become familiar with evil. He saw I had ingenuity above my years, and he cruelly directed

that ingenuity to fraud and wrong. Mr. Cranmer ——”

“Enough,” said Reginald, “we do not wish to call such days, or such exploits, to your recollection. You were then scarcely more than thirteen years of age, and knew not the object to which such ingenuity was to be turned. Was it not so?”

Fornham requested permission to have a chair to sit down, for he began to grow faint.

Major Dacre rose, and said :—“Daniel Fornham, I hope that I am speaking the language of all present, when I tell you, that, much as we may wish to see you reinstated in every requisite bearing and position of your professional calling, we can only do so, under the most solemn assurance on your part, that, if the past be *forgotten*, your future life may be the most honourable and convincing test that it *ought* to be taken. What you have done, in the cause of my nephew, demands not only my acknowledgments, but my grateful thanks. If your *future* career be influenced by this line of proceeding, you have only to sit down in peace and comfort by your fire-side, and count upon the ready patronage of every honourable neighbour. I am certainly disposed to accept your contrition for the past, and your promises for the future. I hate placing the neck of any one under the yoke ; and require no further concession which

should subject you to an ignominious humiliation. There is my hand, sir ; shake it, if you sympathize in these sentiments."

Fornham seized the Major's hand with both of his own, and bowed his head, shaking it most heartily.

The congress was dissolved.

"Come, Mr. Fornham, let the village see us all walking together to the residence of your late master," said Mr. Clutterbuck ; and they rose up for the spot.

As they entered the office, the magistrate exclaimed, "Methinks I yet smell the burning of the smock-frock !"*

Fornham reconnoitred the entire premises ; and breaking open the desk, "what is this?" said he, "which looks among the latest memoranda of its quondam owner?" He read as follows:—"The tempest is too thick and too stirring to stand up against it an hour longer, and I am off for Stuttgart ; but the creature Fornham is to be my companion, and he shall be moulded at my pleasure to do all the dirty, and even dangerous, work in contemplation. He dare not say nay."

"But I *did* say nay, and *acted* nay, as his life's blood attests, gentlemen."

They were all necessarily horrified at this dia-

bolical memorandum, which it was presumed, in the hurry of the moment, Silvertop forgot to throw into the fire, or to take with him.

“Let us quit a spot so stinking with iniquity,” said the Major; adding, “before you are domiciled here, Fornham, I hope you will paint and white-wash every hole and corner of the house.”

The gentlemen now took leave of the REPENTANT, and retired to their respective homes, with the exception of Reginald Cranmer and Fornham.

“Well, Fornham, the world is now smooth again for your feet. You can walk without stumbling; or, if you *do* fall, it will be entirely your own fault.”

“It will, indeed, sir, and I deserve to have my neck fractured by the fall. How can I repay you?”

“Not another word. Now go and mix among your neighbours.”

Fornham left the quondam abode of wickedness with a bounding step and a heart beating with thankfulness. Roger Payne, with his well-known crew, was quickly in advance.

“Why, Master Fornham, we hear so much about your bravery—”

“Not another word. Tell me, is Phœbe Crane—”

“You mean Phœbe *Cotton*.”

“Well, has she recovered the *fright* rather than *fall*?”

“Look you, sir, she is coming with her husband, both of them to thank you.”

It were impossible to describe the feelings of “the repentant” as Phœbe approached. Indeed, she stood all at once still and trembling.

“What ails you, Phœbe?” said her husband.

“I cannot tell, but I am unable to stir another step.”

“Why, there stands your deliverer!”

And that deliverer did indeed stand—for he, too, was seized with a stoppage-fit. What might all this mean? Phœbe thought of other days. So did Fornham. The former remembered the dreadful interview in the office of Silvertop, and the peculiar frame of mind with which she sought that interview. The latter seemed to recollect every burning word or scolding expression that passed between them. Who was first to break silence? for there is in almost every condition of human nature a slight struggle between conscience and pride.

This state became intolerable.—“Can the wife of Frank Cotton forgive and forget?”

“*Forgive* every thing: but one thing she can never *forget*.”

“Name it without reserve,” said Fornham.

“That to Daniel Fornham she is indebted for the *preservation of her life*!”

The repentant absolutely burst into tears, and

ran and shook Phoebe with both hands, so as to endanger the sockets of the arms.

“Hurrah for ever!” said Frank Cotton; “you must dine and sup and sleep at the oaken cabin; and if you talk in your sleep, be sure you tell us all about the scoundrel Silvertop, and the ducats and parchments.”

A crowd was now collected: and the preserver of Phoebe Cotton was cheered to the cabin of her husband.

“Who would not be Daniel Fornham?”—exclaimed Payne—and he immediately sought his own hovel to give vent to “the poet,” which was pressing upon him very strongly.

While the rival residences of Hasleby Park, Thornborough Abbey, and Dacre Hall, were striving to outdo each other in attentions paid to Reginald Cranmer, the owner of the latter place was subjected to unusual fits of abstraction and meditation. That brow which should have been as smooth as ivory on the successful return of a beloved nephew, was frequently furrowed with care and indented with anxiety; and what seemed very remarkable, it increased in this characteristic on every visit of that identical nephew. At length Reginald noticed it. He entered Dacre Hall one morning earlier than usual, and surprised his

uncle in the act of reading what looked like a lawyer's *folio paper*. On his entrance, Major Dacre endeavoured to conceal the papers, and was evidently struck of a heap.

"I beg pardon, but I fear I am intruding?"

"Reginald Cranmer can at no time be an intruder."

"But you are seriously engaged, perhaps, in correcting some of Payne's verses?"

"Faith, no: it is anything but fiction, my dear Reginald, which you know is the soul of poetry. But you will breakfast here?"

"I came expressly, and with a message from my mother, that you will choose your own party, and dine with her before the end of the week. I dare say I could *name* your party, as thus: Mr. and Mrs. with Miss and Jemima Ponton; Nicholas Tyndale; Richard Clutterbuck, Esq.; Mrs. Freshwater; the vicar and curate with their respective ladies."

"This is well enough, but we must have *another lady*."

Reginald was seized with a fit of stupidity or forgetfulness.

"Hand me one of those lawyer's folios," said the Major. "Look here."

"I crave you mercy, my dear uncle; how could I be such an idiot as to forget the inmate of *Wood-*

bine Lodge. But why is the name of Danvers in these papers?"

"You have just hit the proper nail on the head. Listen: for the moment is come when my destinies may be said to be at your disposal."

Reginald looked wildly—retreating. The Major reiterated the expression.

"Explain, I entreat. *Davus sum, non Ædipus,*," said the nephew.

"Yes, Reginald," resumed the uncle, "with your permission, I mean to marry the WIDOW DANVERS, and the lawyer's folios are neither more nor less than the marriage-settlement."

Nothing could exceed the surprise of Reginald Cranmer.

"*Me*, sir; *my* permission! what have I to do with it? You are entire master of your own thoughts and of your own actions. God forbid that I should ever stand in the way of what seems so admirably calculated to make you happy. Marry the widow—to-morrow, if you please."

"My noble fellow!" shouted the Major; "you take only a *fore-shortened* view of this picture. You are my *presumptive* heir."

"What of that, sir? You may have an *heir-apparent*—and Heaven grant you may! Thus the branches of the Dacre tree will be extended, with a little *warbler* or two sitting snugly among the leaves!"

“Reginald! this avowal alone would have prevented my marriage; for I always have, and always *will*, consider you as my heir, both apparent and presumptive. Listen. In a measure of so much importance, I thought it right to consult our medical friend, Ruffham. You smile; but it’s no laughing matter, young man!”

“Well, sir, I will look as grave as if I had crawled out of the cave of Trophonius. Go on.”

“Thus, then, it terminated. The candid and clever Mr. Ruffham—”

“Pardon me,” said Reginald, looking very grave; “but if any ulterior consideration, as connected with *me*, stood in your way, I hope you gave it to the winds of heaven as freely as I pour this coffee into my cup!” And he filled his cup accordingly.

“I tell you,” continued Major Dacre, “that no engagement—no consideration of any kind—should put your ‘nose out of joint,’ as to the succession to my property.”

Reginald here jocosely passed his fore-finger across his nose.

“Yes, I say, *that* nose shall not have one fibre disjointed by any indiscreet act of mine”—added the Major, rather grandiloquently.

“Indiscreet, sir?” re-echoed Reginald. “What is DISCRETION, if the marrying a lady at Mrs. Danvers’ time of life be *indiscretion*?”

“Just so, my brave boy ; but Ruffham, being earnestly pressed, said, ‘let me take the subject home with me to my pillow, and you shall hear to-morrow.’ He *did* take the subject home with him to his pillow, and on the morrow gravely pronounced that the contemplated measure was one of equal prudence and safety. Mrs. Danvers, you know, is in her forty-sixth year ?”

“Forty-six, thirty-six, or *twenty-six*, marry her, my incomparable uncle ; and let her know that she will have *my* benediction on the occasion. Give me only Caroline Ponton, and—”

“Why, you *have* her ?”

“Ay, after a fashion ; but let her be my wife in *reality*, and the Widow, Danvers, *Mrs. Dacre* in *reality*, and we’ll all go capering over the hills, and brushing away the dews of the morning, like plovers as they scud along the Newmarket turf. Who does not love a plover’s *egg* ?”

“A mountain is moved from my breast, my gallant Reginald ! Such noble generosity !—such breadth and bravery of feeling, mark you as the worthy descendant of the mighty Cranmer. Were you led to the stake,* you could hold out your

* I am among the *sceptical* about the burning of Cranmer’s right hand separately from his body ; having read all that Fox and Strype, and even Mr. Todd, say, in support of it. It is a tale of pure dramatic effect. It could not be.

hand as steadily and as unflinchingly as did your great ancestor, the Archbishop himself."

"The *stake*, my dear uncle! Lead me to the *dove-cote*; let me hear the cooing of Caroline from one aperture—and, if you please, the murmur of Isabella Danvers from another!"

"The horizon of my future life is without a cloud! Your hand, Reginald."

Cranmer's right hand had sinned enough; and perhaps its owner would have cheerfully submitted to its amputation—the punishment inflicted upon state-prisoners at Paris before the guillotine falls. But our Archbishop, when at the stake, was surrounded by "a hundred of wood-fagots, and a hundred and a half of furze-fagots."—See Todd, vol. ii. p. 510. How, then, surrounded by *such* a conflagration (for Cranmer had no gunpowder, mercifully, put round his neck, as Latimer had) *could* the right hand be burnt separately from the other parts of the body? Bilney, the martyr, thrust his hand into a lighted candle, to prove his firmness of purpose. But the heroism of the sufferer is not to be measured by the insulated act of burning the hand. That hand had, indeed, "grievously offended;" but it must have shared the general fate of the body. Great as were the talents and the virtues of Archbishop Cranmer, his RECANTATION was unworthy of every thing which had preceded it. The love of life, the temptation which with the trap was baited to compromise his conscience, was the LAST THING which true Christian philosophy should have taught him to consider; and he who had so long faced the frowns and braved the storms of the most atrocious kingly power that ever existed, should not even have *thought* of crawling forth a miserable existence under the taunts and contempt of the bigotted Mary and the relentless Bonner.

“And my heart, too, sir, if a certain lady will permit it.”

If this present moment were not *HAPPINESS* to both parties, I know not where happiness was to be found.

CHAPTER V.

VILLAGE FESTIVITIES.—ARRIVAL OF THE FURSTENHOFF TREASURES.—THE MYSTERIOUS HAND.

THERE were frequent meetings between the leading parishioners to commemorate the triumphant return of REGINALD CRANMER. The difficulty was, how to draw the circle *large* enough; and how to mix up the various characters who expressed a readiness not only to be present, but to contribute to the expenses. As to the latter, neither Major Dacre, nor Squire Ponton, nor Mrs. Cranmer, would hear of any thing but the proceeds of the ducats being made conducive to the payment of the festivities. Indeed, it was rather our Reginald who proposed, and insisted upon it: the Major equally insisting upon the *fête* taking place in his own demesnes. It would be time to assail the Abbey on the marriage of its young master.

After a good deal of talking and planning, it was resolved that the whole management of these VILLAGE FESTIVITIES should be entrusted to Fornham; as an active, intelligent, and now popular

inhabitant of the place: Thorpe was to act under his orders; and a marquee was to be erected in the centre of the lawn, opposite Dacre Hall, not too far from the *batterie de cuisine*: so that there might be a constant supply of the needful, with the least possible trouble. But it was also necessary to establish a few isolated kitchens; in the character of large pots, or boilers—which should contain a baron of beef here, a huge ham there, half a sack of potatoes in another place, and vegetables of every description in a fourth place. It need hardly be added, that these projected festivities formed the constant theme of discussion to all the gossips of the village; every one having his own view and his own talk upon the subject. But Mrs. Thimbleton carried her views beyond what she was pleased to call so limited a boundary; having set her whole mind and fancy to work about the marriage of Reginald Cranmer. “She *did* trust and hope that Mr. Cranmer would not think of marrying till her golden pippins were ripe. The Major had bespoke a bushel of them.”

Meanwhile, conversation of a more important description occupied the owners of Hasleby Park and Thornborough Abbey. There is no occasion to dilate upon the topic of that courtship—which now, necessarily, assumed a fixed and almost methodical character between Reginald and Caro-

line, as the day of their union approached :—which made them “together range the fields” in sweet reality : which caused them to look upon flowers and fruits as if both were to inhale their fragrance, or partake of their flavour, at the same moment—

“No craving void left aching in the breast.”—POPE.

To roam upon “highways and byways”—or in secret coverts—

“Where the dun umbrage o’er the falling stream
Romantic hangs.”

THOMSON.

By night, as by day, they were together—gazing at sun-sets, at moon-risings ; or chatting with the villagers ; or arranging Mrs. Partridge’s accounts ; cheering the sad ; and comforting the “desolate and oppressed.” Nor did they, when apart from society, ever seem to chide the lingering moments which intercepted the bridal hour. They were sure of a happy union. That “sober certainty of waking bliss”—so prettily expressed by the author of the Seasons—regulated alike their thoughts and their actions : and what a world of discussion they had to provoke with each other ! The whole Stuttgart History to go over and over again. The whiskered gambler and his cunning crew. The attack upon the Castle—the apparently hair-breadth escape ! But, more than the whole of these collec-

tively—their intense affection for each other—in every crisis of fate ! Their vows wafted to heaven : their fixed, unshaken purpose of soul, to let nothing of the base dross of this world corrupt or decompose that fixedness of purpose. And, now, Caroline began to recover her looks. Her eyes did not seem to be so deeply indented : a milder effulgence streamed from them : and, now and then, if their concentrated radiance was fixed upon the darker eyes of her lover, it assured him that there were sensations to be felt beyond the power of language to describe. Her cheeks were getting more plump and more rosy ; and if she “breathed of youth,” she also breathed of health.

“It were a pity they should ever be married, they are so good and so constant, as it is”—was the sapient remark of Mrs. Thorpe:

“Why don’t they become man and wife?”—said the two widows, Sparks and Smithers, apart to Mrs. Thimbleton.

“To be sure,” said this latter personage, “there can be no reasonable hindrance ; but I do trust that they will not be united until my *golden pippins are ripe*.”

Middleditch overheard this dialogue, and he could not resist a growl upon the subject—“As if your golden pippins had any thing more to do with this subject than three skips of a —— !”

“Hold your abusive tongue, Master Middle-ditch; and look after your double D.”—exclaimed the widow Thimbleton, retreating within her orchard gate.

Young Mr. Ruffham was making his way onward.

“Well, sir, are you going to try your hand again at a union!” said Mrs. Partridge.

“To say the truth, I made such bungling work of the *last*, that I should be afraid to speculate again in this ceremony,” replied the young deacon. “And besides—but whose marriage do you mean?” added Mr. Ruffham.

“Whose? why Mr. Cranmer’s to be sure. Pray, Mr. Ruffham (and I know you to be a truth-speaking young gentleman) is *any body else* in our vicarage about to be united in holy wedlock?” observed Mrs. Thimbleton, who had come out again on seeing the approach of the young deacon. But Mr. Ruffham saw his error. He had been precipitate and indiscreet. The probable marriage of the Major with the owner of Woodbine Lodge had been communicated to him in secrecy; and it was not for him even to hint at it. So he resumed the dialogue thus:—

“Why, Mrs. Thimbleton, in these marrying days, it is impossible to say who *is*, or who is *not*, going to be married. They talk of your neighbour

Smithers, with a godly gentleman who pays Sabbath visits at the Jolly Butchers."

"How, sir, Smithers and Tramp?"—and the lady neared the deacon, opening her eyes wider and wider at every advance of the foot.

"Yes, Mrs. Thimbleton, and they talk of Nicholas Tyndale, Esq. with Miss Jemima Ponton."

"Why you don't say so? Surely *they* will wait till my pippins become of the true *golden* tint!"

"I suspect they are only waiting for *golden* tint of a *different* complexion. You will be at the Major's to-morrow?"

"Assuredly, sir, in my best trim. They tell me we are to be *marqueed* for the time?"

"You will be under a large awning, and have an excellent band of music, I make no doubt."

"Not if Tibbett's clarionet, and Middleditch's growling double D. be heard in the band,"—said Mrs. Thimbleton; curtsying, and wishing Mr. Ruffham a good day.

Preparations had been making for the last three days upon the lawn; and it was impossible for people to be busier, or more active or more consequential than the venerable butler and his venerable bride, Mrs. Thorpe. The housekeepers of Haslebury Park and Thornborough Abbey united their forces; and Fornham, with admirable tact and admirable good humour, contrived to please all

parties, and to reconcile all jarring interests. Tom Crane was his head officer and adjutant-general, who marshalled the troops and arranged the dishes with perfect skill. There were one hundred and fifty plates laid: and the day of the festival, the anniversary of Caroline's birth-day, was ushered in by the ringing of bells, the discharge of six pateraroes, with nine hurrahs in succession. My readers have, in all probability, seen one of Teniers' admirable pictures of a village-fête. Had any of those readers seen the *present*, he would have been immediately reminded of all the fun and jollity of the performances of that celebrated Dutch painter. The isolated cooks, or superintendents of pots and pans; one with a white cap, another with a red cap, and a third with a green, each brandishing a ladle, and threatening to lay it upon the backs of a parcel of teasing boys and girls—added prodigiously to the picturesqueness of the scenery. All the villagers previously noticed were present; and Scrimes sounded forth an emphatic “amen,” to the short simple benediction of the Rev. H. Markham, the vicar.

Straight the knives and forks were put in motion, rattling against the plates. Beakers brimming; now meat, and now pudding, invaded; here beef, and there mutton; salt, pepper, vinegar, mustard, all put into requisition, as it were, at the same

moment. The pewter pot, the horn cup, the leathern jug : and now for pipes, and ale, and tobacco. Mr. Stigwood, the vicar's churchwarden, was at the top of one table ; and Mr. Hancock, the parish churchwarden, at the head of another. The former took a long deep draught of the genuine October—

———“ drawn from his dark retreat
Of thirty years.”

THOMPSON.

pronouncing no “ body-comfort ” to be like unto it. The latter, for the first time in his life, drank two glasses of the best brown old sherry, of Shaw and Maxwell ; one to the health of the Major, the other to that of Miss Ponton—which did not *upset* him. Scrimmes was making serious play into a baron of beef. Roger Payne had got hold of a rabbit, which reminded him of a *mole*. Bunn was cutting up a ham of some thirty pounds weight. Tibbetts had neglected his clarionet for pickled pork and brocoli. But it were endless to particularise. Thorpe was, *ex officio*, the vice-president of the feast : his eyes were every where but on his plate ; and with the entire concurrence of Fornham, his wife sat on his left hand—as the lady-president. She was attired in a blaze of finery ; wearing an old shot silk gown, which, according to the light, was purple, or straw colour, or tea green : an elevated cap, smothered in chitterings of Mechlin lace, and affecting to be

cocked somewhat on one side ; with a breadth of trimming and lace, about the upper portion of the stomacher, enough to smother a throat and face less rotund and less capacious than her own. The Queen of England, for the nonce, could not have been a personage of greater importance.

The company all walked round the marquee. An inferior branch of Weippert's band was playing on the lawn, with some trumpets and fifes, and a big drum, from the 4th dragoon guards, of which Lieut.-Col. Chatterton is the able commanding officer. Apart was a small tent, for the respective families of the neighbourhood ; while Fornham, Crane, and a few select, of the *lower house*, had a table to themselves (after the banquet had commenced) under a large oak tree, with cider and ale in abundance : the Major perambulating the whole, at intervals, and crying out, " SPARE NOT, WASTE NOT."

" See Fornham," said he, " after you have dined, that they don't make themselves unfit for *the dance* which is to follow ; to be opened by my nephew and Miss Ponton." Fornhan required not a second notification.

A finer evening for a dance could not have been selected ; for although the moon at Midsummer, has but little effect, still it is as well, for general appearances, that her silvery orb should be rolling

in tranquil splendour along. They are all up—and to their guns ; in other words,

“ Each by the lass he loves.”

Caroline Ponton, dressed as a sylvan queen, with a small pearl crescent at the top of her head, led down the dance with Reginald, all nerve and elasticity. The Major, with his Isabella, followed. Then came Tyndale, in the fantastic dress with which he had attended Marianne Cranmer's nuptials, flying off at a tangent with Jemima Ponton, who also wore her dress upon the same occasion. The vicar with Mrs. Cranmer ; Mr. Clutterbuck with Mrs. Markham ; Mr. Thomson and Mrs. Ruffham ; Mr. Ruffham with Mrs. Thomson. The guests followed. Thorpe *would* dance with Mrs. Thimbleton—with a young golden pippin fastened at the top of her stomacher. Mr. Stigwood could not do otherwise than select Mrs. Thorpe. These amiable ladies, of rotund dimensions and no slight weight, were quickly *incapacitated*—and sat down, *not* unmoved.

“ Would Mrs. Cotton do Daniel Fornham the honour to go down *one* dance with him ? ”

“ Could Mrs. Cotton say nay to the Master of the Ceremonies ? ” and away they darted, with the firm foot of health and strength !

“ Why is Mrs. Partridge a mere looker-on ? ” said Frank Cotton.

“ Because she can get no one to dance with her.”

“ You shan’t say that a second time, Mrs. Partridge. Accept my arm ; ” and they followed the preceding couple. “ Tom Crane is every where.”

“ Heigho ! not for ‘ a husband,’ but a partner ! ” said Mrs. Hull, the housekeeper of Thornborough Abbey ; for the sight of Mrs. Thorpe’s stately motion down the dance had provoked the risings of envy in that lady’s bosom.

“ Will you have a young fellow, Mrs. Hull, like Tom Crane ? ” said the latter.

“ I will have whom I can get,” returned the anxious Mrs. Hull ; and she *strove* to keep up with Crane ; who, in compassion to her stiff joints (for she was the very opposite to Mrs. Thorpe and Mrs. Thimbleton in fleshy measurement), stopped at the *ninth* couple.

Young Mr. Ruffham made an odd choice. He took compassion upon the Widow Sparks, in spite of her being a *Tabernacler*, and drew her out insensibly to join the dance.

“ The Lord be good unto me,” said she ; “ what would my poor, dear husband say, if he were alive ? ”

“ What would your *godly confessor* say ? ”—replied the young deacon, very smartly.

“ Oh, Mr. Ruffham ! he is now *nothing* to me ! His infidelity is most dreadful.” And she slid, or walked, or hobbled, down the dance. But where is Miss Cranmer all this while ? She does not dance. Is she waiting for the arrival of Sir Benjamin Burridge, who overtook her brother on his return home ? By no means. She is walking up and down the lawn, with one of Mrs. Thomson’s children in each hand ; and only waits till the married ladies are first served, to accept the hand of Mr. Clutterbuck or the vicar’s. Her appearance and attire bespoke her *almost* the RURAL QUEEN of the day.

During this general hilarity, the mole-catcher and village-poet, with Bunn, Briskett, Tibbetts, Scrimes, and Middleditch, were all doggedly seated at one small table, quaffing strong ale, and reciting coarse verses. Tibbetts now and then gave them a flourish with his clarionet ; and the bass-singer strove several times, in vain, to reach his “ double D.” In fact, the liquor got, by degrees, the mastery over them. Roger Payne was the first to slide *insensibly* from his seat ; the *second* slide was made by Tibbetts ; and then Bunn, and Briskett, and Scrimes, like knock’d down nine-pins ; while the bass-singer, stupidly staring upon his *slaughtered* companions, gave one deep, long-drawn growl, and expired with “ double D.” in his throat—incapable of bringing it to his *lips*. Tuffnell, the parish con-

stable, seeing them thus slain, reported to Major Dacre.

“Let them lie till morning,” observed the Major; “a cool turf and cool night air do wonders in raising the dead to life.” And they slept and snored till the morning. On the whole a more perfect picture of general and happy festivity could not have been witnessed.

On the day following this long-remembered festivity, there was a pretty large delivery of post-letters at the three principal mansions in the village; but the Major, to his infinite gratification, received two more than either his sister or the squire. Some of these letters were of importance, in many respects. A little group of visitors had been invited to Hasleby Park and Dacre Hall; and with the acceptances of the invitations, came one letter, announcing the safe arrival of the *FURSTENHOFF TREASURES* at Hammersley’s, with the box of parchments and its accompaniments, “waiting the Major’s pleasure, as to the disposition of the latter.” This was evidently a mistake, as Reginald Cranmer could alone have the disposal of his own property. Still the Major was well pleased to have the first announcement made to himself, and he walked up to the Abbey to convey the intelligence, with a firm step and an elated heart. Reginald had quitted home for Hasleby Park, before his arrival; but Mrs. Cranmer

saw, from the joyful look of her brother, that something *good*, as well as new, was stirring in the wind.

“Capital news, my dear Julia. A letter from Hammersley.”

“What to announce?”

“That’s tellings for Reginald.”

“May not the *mother* of Reginald know?”

“Give me your arm—for Hasleby Park!” and they were off in an instant.

The Major did nothing but hum a tune—and look this way and that—as he walked along. The sister knew his oddities, and pressed nothing. Reginald and Caroline were issuing from the porch for a morning’s walk, when Major Dacre, on seeing them, shouted aloud, “Victory!”

“This is no news, my dear uncle.”

“Victory, I repeat,” said the Major; “and the fruits of the victory are at Hammersley’s.”

“That *is* news!” said Reginald; and both Caroline and himself flew to embrace Mrs. Cranmer.

“Sound a retreat,” said the Major; “for you cannot just yet go, sentimentalising it together. There is business to attend to. The box of parchments only waits your pleasure, to be at Thornborough Abbey, my dear Reginald.”

They all hurried within doors: Squire Ponton being infinitely more excited—if not crazy—than

either Reginald or his uncle ; and he did nothing but keep telling Caroline, “ What a lucky creature she was.”

“ To be sure, sir,” replied the daughter, archly, “ in having such a husband as Mr. Cranmer !”

“ Ay, child, but the ducats, too !”

“ Hang the ducats,” said Mrs. Ponton ; “ as if Caroline sought happiness in ducats ! However, it must be confessed, that matters have ended famously. Now, Caroline, fix your wedding-day.”

“ Excuse me, my dear mother ; but that requires the consideration of more heads than *one*.”

“ Not at all,” exclaimed Reginald ; “ Caroline is mistress supreme of all hymeneal movements. To-morrow, if she pleases.”

A peal of laughter ensued ; which terminated in the Major’s undertaking to write to Hammersley’s, to request the box of parchments to be sent by the York mail forthwith ; and to invest the money in the three-and-a-half per cents.

“ Do as you like, my dear uncle,” said the nephew ; “ but don’t prevent Caroline and I from enjoying our morning walk.” And they both made for the upper wood—where the memorable *midnight battu* took place.

Within a few days after, the mysterious box, with its yet more mysterious contents, arrived at Thornborough Abbey ; and, in order that the fullest

publicity might be given to their contents, (for fame, after all, is but a squinting jade, never looking at you direct in the face,) the vicar and curate, with the Major and Mr. Clutterbuck, were invited to be present at the examination. The portrait of Reginald's father was also in the same packet. An exclamation of mixed joy and sorrow accompanied the first view of that precious portrait—for there looked the late elder Cranmer, as his wife had been wont to gaze upon him:—placid, with a sweet expression of countenance, a lofty, broad forehead, a penetrating eye—the air of a thorough-bred English gentleman, in whom the commingling blood of all the Cranmers that had gone before him, might be said to concentrate. He was carried off prematurely—but a truce to unavailing regrets. Reginald rang the bell: “Bid Crane come here.” What might this mean? and ere they had time to ask the reason, Crane entered, just as the portrait was placed upon a chair in the most favourable light. He was instantly carried to Fürstenhoff Castle, on the first view. He instinctively clasped his hands, and said, “Ah, sir! this reminds me of the Fürstenhoff campaign.” Major Dacre planted himself steadily in front of the picture: bit his under lip slightly: paced a step forward: retreated, and extending his right hand, energetically exclaimed,

“*Sic oculos, sic ille manus, sic ora ferebat!*”

Meanwhile, handkerchief after handkerchief had given other evidences of general sorrow ; and Mrs. Cranmer begged Tom Crane to take the portrait into the library.

And now for the parchments. First appeared THE MYSTERIOUS HAND. A smothered shout, or scream, attested its first view.

“Gracious Heaven!” said Mrs. Cranmer, “is this inestimable treasure yet surviving? And examine the largely illuminated words upon which it rests—
GUARD WELL.”*

They all crept round, and stooped down, to assure themselves of the reality of what they saw.

“Do you mean to say,” said Mr. Clutterbuck, the magistrate, “that THIS was the hand of ARCHBISHOP CRANMER, who was burnt at Oxford?”

“I mean not only to *say* so, but to *affirm* it,” replied the Major.

“Then you must have a most extraordinary chain of evidence to support it,” eagerly rejoined the magistrate ; “in fact, my dear Major, you will please to bear in mind that this is a relic, not of the Dacre, but of the *Cranmer*, family.”

There is a way of giving a human being a stinging cuff, or box of the ear, without raising your hand ; and this was most sensibly felt by the Major. His whole countenance was now red and now

purple. He raised his head, his blue eyes flashed, and his lips slightly quivered. Reginald "flew to the rescue."

"I have always understood," said he, "that the HAND, which had signed the recantations of my great ancestor, and which is supposed to have first dropped from his frame, in the surrounding conflagration, had been carefully preserved, either by his brother John or Edmund, on picking up his scattered ashes—and was by one of them given to the Archbishop's son, Thomas Cranmer, who sold Kirkstall, in the county of York, to Sir Thomas Cecil, son of Lord Burghley, about the year 1580. If I can be allowed the uninterrupted descent of this too celebrated hand down to this period, there can be no doubt of proving its identity to the present moment. See, it is evidently charred by fire!"

"The joints have been as evidently replaced," said Mr. Clutterbuck, still anxious for advocating his view of the subject.

"Is it too much to affirm," said the vicar, "that the smell of fire is yet proveable from its peculiar scent?"

They each applied the test, not daring to raise the hand; and at this moment, Mr. Ruffham fortunately came hurrying into the room.

"Look at this," said the Major.

"I see the right hand of a man which has been

evidently consumed *by fire!*”—said the medical attendant, gravely and leisurely.

“There! there!” from all quarters.

“I hope Mr. Clutterbuck is satisfied,” said the Major, with a look not altogether divested of raillery.

“Mr. Clutterbuck is satisfied that this may be, and perhaps is, the right hand of a human being which has been consumed by fire, as Mr. Ruffham attests; but it does not from hence follow that it is the right hand of *Archbishop Cranmer*.”

“Do you doubt my nephew’s declaration?”

“I cannot doubt a declaration which I have heard with my own ears; but I doubt the *inferences* deducible from it, such as Mr. Cranmer indulges.* A lawyer is fond of *facts*.”

“Ay, sir, and of *words* too.”

Mr. Clutterbuck turned quickly round, and quietly observed, “Where is my hat?”

A very Fürstenhoff storm was brewing: for, to add to the increasing tempest, Major Dacre rang the bell, and said, “Bring Mr. Clutterbuck’s hat.”

On that gentleman’s retreating, and somewhat slamming the outer door, Major Dacre’s heart smote him. He had been deliberately guilty of rudeness. The first ebullition of passion is usually pardonable; but the quiet and collected manner in which he had

* See this point somewhat mooted at page 95, *ante*.

told the servant to "bring Mr. Clutterbuck's hat," quite shocked the family circle. Events sometimes happen, of a sudden, which paralyse or stupify—and these, too, of a very minor consideration. Here was one of the best-bred circles in the kingdom, all quiescent, or struck of a heap, as they allowed a very grave insult to be offered to a gentleman of distinguished worth and talent. A general silence ensued. Reginald covered up "the hand" which had been the cause of such a "cuff," wishing it, in his heart, back again with the body of the martyr, ere it had occasioned such apparent approaching mischief. The Dacres were always somewhat *hot*. The Clutterbucks were always fond of *argumentation*. They must resort to a medium—and that medium was found in the Rev. Henry Markham, the vicar.

Mrs. Cranmer with difficulty kept her tears from flowing—for it was evident to her susceptible heart that her brother had been in error; having rudely put a stop to conversation, which, to her inquiring mind, promised a most interesting result. Reginald went out of the room with his mother. Caroline Ponton followed. There was a general commotion. One after the other rose to express equally his surprise and regret. The Major and Mr. Markham were left alone. The former was preparing to go, when the vicar entreated him to stay awhile.

"No," said the Major, very deliberately, "there will be a written message from Clutterbuck by this time, at Dacre Hall."

"And what if there be? Or what may it portend?"

"Only a meeting: a shot—a thump—a scratch; for I shall receive his fire—and we are better friends afterwards than before:" replied the Major, still maintaining his self-possession.

"Never!" emphatically exclaimed the vicar, "while I have any spiritual influence in this place. Major Dacre, I claim a promise."

"Name it; if it be reasonable, I cannot fail to comply."

"It is most reasonable. Will you remain here till I return, from half an hour's stroll?"

"I am never happier than at Thornborough Abbey;"—and Mr. Markham sought the abode of Mr. Clutterbuck. On his way he met Mrs. Danvers. As he looked agitated, the widow perceived it.

"What was the matter?"

"A mere nothing. I am on my way to cool a breeze which has been blowing up between the Major and ——"

"Who, sir, who?"

"Between the Major and *himself*, madam, that's all"—for, in fact, it might be considered as the

better part of the Major against the *worse*. Mrs. Danvers accelerated her steps to Thornborough Abbey.

Mr. Markham found Mr. Clutterbuck at home, in the act of sealing a note for Major Dacre.

"I am come in good time to be the bearer of that note, I would hope?"

"No, sir; my servant shall be the bearer."

"The Major is still at the Abbey—and I am returning thither, after five minutes' conversation with the *writer* of that note"—said the vicar, in the most gentle and winning manner imaginable.

"Sit down, my dear vicar, and tell me what brings you hither with so hurried a step, and in so apparently excited a manner. *There* is the note, if you *must* be the bearer."

"I must and will, my dear Mr. Clutterbuck—if you peremptorily insist upon it; but think twice ere you allow it to be presented. The Major is a *high* man, and a *warm* one too."

"Sir, I am not *beneath* him, nor will he find me *pusillanimous*. I know who and what I have to meet."

"Perhaps not."

"I know I have to meet Major Dacre; who has gathered glory, such as it *is*, from his prowess as a duellist. Yet let me not injure him: the glory has rather *followed*, than been *sought*, by him."

"This does your heart infinite credit, sir; and the spirit which has prompted such an utterance is infinitely too precious to be extinguished by the murderous random shot of a pistol."

"That may, or may not be; but, Mr. Markham, are you not wasting time?"

"Oh! Mr. Clutterbuck—neither rebuke nor retard me in the office of CHRISTIAN BENEVOLENCE. You are both infinitely beyond the vulgar level of pulling triggers to prove who is in the right. Leave that resentful and cowardly course to brawlers, gamblers, and sensualists."

"Mr. Markham, what I have written, I have written."

"Yes, sir, but it is possible to write in *error*."

"I demand a prompt apology for a gross insult; and as deliberate as gross."

"I undertake that it shall be given you—amply."

"Then I am satisfied: although let it not be supposed that I shrink from a bullet, directed even by Major Dacre's unerring hand."

"Alack! my good sir, you will be subjected to nothing of the kind. The Major told me that he should only *receive your fire*."

"Then we meet upon unequal terms. I will NOT FIGHT. I have no appetite for enacting the part of a MURDERER for the first time;" and Mr. Markham returned the note.

“ And now, sir,” said the latter, “ I have a personal favour to ask of you ?”

“ Mr. Markham has only to ask and to have.”

“ Will you stop at home for an hour ?”

“ I am at home for the day. I think I have had enough of my *first* morning visit ?”

Mr. Markham shook Mr. Clutterbuck cordially by the hand, and returned to the Abbey. He wore so gracious an aspect on entering, that the most favourable auguries were naturally entertained.

“ Where is Major Dacre, my visit exclusively concerns him ?” He was walking in the garden with Mrs. Danvers, having the lawyer’s *folios* in his left hand ; but wholly concealing from her the probability of an hostile message from Mr. Clutterbuck. He was requested to come in doors immediately—Mr. Markham had returned.

“ The sooner the better,” said the Major ; “ I hate to dream about *pistols*.”

“ Oh, Heavens !” exclaimed his companion—“ what mean you by *pistols* ?” and they entered the house, with every eye directed towards the vicar, and with every ear turned to catch every syllable that dropt from him. Mr. Markham requested the Major’s presence alone.

“ No—not while I am his nephew, and mean to be his second”—said Reginald Cranmer.

“ Reserve your fire, my dear Major : there will

be no meeting"—said the Vicar, in the most prompt and pleasing manner imaginable.

"How so?" said the Major, with a sort of mortified expression.

"Mr. Clutterbuck won't meet you."

"Then he is a COWARD!"

"He is a man of valour and of humanity. His note was written, to be conveyed by his servant; but I undertook to be the bearer—and, God be thanked, I altered the tenor of that note."

"How, and wherefore?"

"By telling him your *own words*, 'you would not return his fire.' He said, he knew he was exposed to an unerring aim from *your* pistol; but, as you had intended only to *receive his fire*, he fought upon unequal terms, and he had no wish to become a MURDERER."

"Mr. Clutterbuck is a man of infinite honour and courage; and my conduct, if not base, was absolutely unworthy of a gentleman. Has he the courage to accept an apology?" And Major Dacre was looking about for paper and ink.

"You shall not *write* one. I know he will be content with my oral delivery of that apology. Let me ——"

"Do, my dear Vicar, as you please; be the messenger of peace—the bearer of good-will. I could fight fifty Peezenfeezeres, but I will never pull a

trigger against Richard Clutterbuck." Mrs. Danvers entered, followed by all the inmates.

"Speak, speak, life or death!" said a dozen voices.

"Long live Major Dacre!"

"Rather, long live Richard Clutterbuck!" said the latter. The Vicar quickly imparted the good news, and flew to the magistrate's.

"Major Dacre, sir, is ready to make you any apology which you may dictate!"

"I always did, and always shall, hate *dictatorship*: if he says he has done wrong—"

"My dear Mr. Clutterbuck, he not only says so roundly, but he says you are a man of infinite honour and courage!"

"God bless him!" replied the magistrate; "and the sooner he *dines* with me the better. Let all the Cranmers and Pontons move in his train!" Away flew the Vicar, for the third time; and on delivering the message, the whole party made the hall ring with hurrahs!

It can scarcely fail to be observed, in the part performed by the worthy Vicar, that he had recourse only to worldly expedients in the management of the difficult affair allotted to him. Had those expedients *failed*, and were it necessary for him to have clothed himself with the power and influence of his professional calling, there can be no doubt, I appre-

hend, of his having entirely succeeded in preventing two excellent men from running the risk of what may be called PRIVILEGED MURDER. At their time of life, it would have been little short of the most idiotic insanity.

Thus, by a strange fatuity, the HAND of *Archbishop Cranmer*, which might be said to have "offended" more grievously, but certainly more unconsciously, than before, was made instrumental to the binding of hearts in a more close and affectionate union. There were "rare doings" at the magistrate's, when the proffered dinner took place: but our business rests with matters of higher "pith and moment."

CHAPTER VI.

THE NOTE OF PREPARATION. — VISITORS FROM
LONDON.—ARCHBISHOP CRANMER.

FOR the first month after the return of Reginald Cranmer, our “sweet Auburn” wore the general aspect of rural felicity in its largest sense. There were no further such doings as those recorded in the preceding chapter ; but there was a constant succession of little “May-pole” assemblies, which, at any rate, afforded excellent practice for Tibbett’s clarionet. These again were intermixed with junketting parties, hay-making frolics, and all those joyous demonstrations of an abundant harvest which are to be found in the north of England about the commencement of the month of August. Daniel Fornham took steady possession of Silvertop’s house and office. Lord Ashton called upon him, and promised his patronage. Sir Benjamin Burridge spoke kindly, though pompously and guardedly. Sir James Risby said “much would depend upon the *début*.” But Reginald Cranmer, at the express

entreaty of his uncle, afforded a splendid opportunity for the *début* in question.

He called, somewhat early, one morning, upon Fornham, and sitting down, and passing his walking-cane for a second or two beneath his teeth, commenced thus :—

“Fornham, an opportunity is about to be given you, in which the test of integrity and of talent may be fairly tried. It is the wish of my uncle that you should draw the marriage settlement between Miss Ponton and myself.—Don’t say a word, but continue to listen.—You will make a lengthened and particular draft of this settlement, on the express instructions of my mother and my uncle. You will then send it up to Messrs. Hill and Randall, 56, Welbeck Street, whom I wish you to appoint your London agents. They are men of unimpeachable integrity ; pains-taking, courteous, and not over given to greedy gain, or filthy lucre. Mr. Randall made my will before I went abroad—in a trice, pleasantly, civilly, and effectually ; and he has drawn up another marriage settlement, connected with this place, which I am not at liberty to mention ; but for *you* is reserved the more important object of the marriage in contemplation—to be solemnized, I would hope, before the expiration of a month. How feel you ? What say you ?”

“Dear Mr. Cranmer, if you will allow and for-

give the apparent familiarity of this address, my heart is eternally at your devotion !”

“ You are getting into the *heroics*, Fomham—descend to the level of an ordinary capacity, like my own.”

“ Then, sir, most heartily do I thank you, your mother, and the Major, for your united liberality and kindness of feeling. I care not whether there be one, two, or two hundred skins of parchment.”

“ Out upon you, man !—but Heaven forbid that there should be more than two.”

“ That will a good deal depend upon the *nature*, rather than the *amount*, of the property. Are there any ‘*deeds to lead the uses*’ to be incorporated ?”

“ Deeds to lead the fiddlesticks ! All I know about ‘leading’ in this matter is, that I mean to ‘lead’ *Miss Ponton to the hymeneal altar*, within a month from this moment.”

“ O, bravo ! sir ; *one* skin if you please ; it is the *test* of your respect and regard for me that will render it the most *remunerating* piece of business of my newly commenced professional life. Shall I wait upon the Major ?”

“ You may ; and may also confide to him what I have mentioned upon the subject ; although, in fact, it amounts to nothing.”

“ To nothing ? To every thing, dear sir ! God

be praised, the NOTE OF PREPARATION is at length struck up!"—and the grateful Fornham made the best of his way to Dacre Hall.

On his route, he met Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe moving somewhat swiftly towards the Abbey.

"Any thing the matter?"

"No—nothing particular; but I have just learnt that the day of Mr. Cranmer's marriage is fixed."

"That is more than I know; but is your master at home?"

"Yes: but may I, in return ask, if any thing particular is the matter?"

"In return, I say, 'nothing particular;' only I should like very much to see Major Dacre."

"You will find him in the library." Fornham increased his pace; but Thorpe and his wife stood still, turning round to eye him as he continued to push towards the Hall.

"There must be something the matter," said Thorpe, "or he would never walk so fast. See, he avoids the common cut, but leaps over a five-barred gate to gain scarcely more than a couple of hundreds of yards."

"Well, Mr. Thorpe," said his better half, "I only wish *you* could do the same."

"Time *was*, my dear, I could have taken a *ten-barred* gate, almost as a standing leap."

"How wofully your stature and legs have dwin-

dled since!" was the caustic reply of Mrs. Thorpe. As the sower, in moving onward, scatters the seed right and left, so this worthy couple, in their onward movements, did nothing but scatter the report of this forthcoming marriage, right and left, as they threaded the village.

Mrs. Partridge forgot all her business; preferring to hang over her door, and inform the good folks as they passed by. Mrs. Thimbleton did not appear quite so much elated; she had secret fears that her golden pippins would not be quite ripe. Mrs. Smithers had given an order to retouch the painting of the "Jolly Butchers," the sign of her public-house. She said the sirloin of beef on the table, around which three butchers were smoking their pipes, was not quite *red* enough; and instead of *lake*, she thought a touch of *scarlet* would do the business more effectually. Phoebe Cotton was beginning to make up a wedding-garland. Mrs. Sparks, who had meditated the entirely throwing aside her mourning for her very worthless husband, declared, that she would make her appearance in colours which would surprise them all. Mrs. Tucker wished Master Mole would compose a set of verses, which she might make the children sing, as well as get by heart. Mrs. Scrimes was determined to manufacture a net-pouch for game, such as they use in the north of England, and which she hoped

Mr. Cranmer would use on the first of September. Tibbetts declared he would make his young master such a pair of slippers, of white spots, upon a red and black ground, as would scare away every sparrow within fifty feet of his walk. He *did* hope, however, to get a new instrument on the occasion, as the old clarionet was marvellously cracked and dissonant. Middleditch declared "they should have his double D in perfection!"—and so they made this "note of preparation" to bear upon their particular callings; only we had almost forgotten to observe, that the mole-catcher gave it out that "the poet" was strong upon him, (*Deus, ecce Deus!*) and he should surprise them all on the occasion.

Meanwhile, Fornham was introduced to Major Dacre, in his library, who was courteous enough to rise to receive him, and to request that he would be immediately seated.

"My nephew, Mr. Fornham, has, in all probability, made you acquainted with the subject matter which so much occupies his time and attention, and in which I am almost as much interested as himself."

Fornham replied that he had received a notification of the *fact* of the marriage itself, rather than any instructions to draw the settlement; and requested the Major, as the time was somewhat short——

“Short!—why it is abundantly long enough for *two* marriage settlements?”

“That must depend, sir, upon the nature of the property to be vested in trusts: at any rate, allow me to say, I am not the man to *slumber* upon my oars!”

“Strike, and pull away!—for you will have the *home* management of mine.”

“How, sir! is Major Dacre about to be united in the holy state of matrimony? Forgive this abruptness; but my heart is dancing within me at the intelligence.”

“And why *not*, sir? A golden pippin beneath an autumnal leaf looks very picturesquely.”

“Ah, sir! but golden pippins differ so much in size and flavour. Surely, Mrs. Thimbleton—”

“Away, monster of iniquity! I had almost said,” and the Major laughed aloud.

“Well, sir, you have evidently taken my blunder in good part; but for ‘the *golden pippin*’ will you allow me to substitute ‘the *graceful woodbine*?’”

“Fornham, thou art a lad of talent and discrimination. Take home these papers.” And here Major Dacre put the marriage settlement, drawn by Mr. Randall, when the former was in town, into his hands: adding, “let us not confound properties. I marry on the assured conviction of never becoming a *parent*.”

Fornham looked in a very questioning manner ; replying, in turn, " you do yourself great injustice, sir. Think of the present noble owner of Holkham ; he was ten years older than yourself when he entered upon that state."

" Yes, but don't you know, in all questions of debate, you are to consider *both* sides of the question ? Mrs. Danvers is forty-six."

" What of *that*, sir ? Miracles never cease :"—and Fornham proceeded to take the most minute and particular instructions for the nephew's marriage settlement. The Major yielded farm after farm, and acre upon acre, on the certainty of his own marriage being unproductive of issue. Mr. Fornham entreated him to think *twice* upon almost every surrender. Never did our Major give instructions in a more cheerful as well as determined manner : the lawyer having, at bottom, tickled the cockles of his heart.

" I have given Thorpe leave to propagate the report of the intended marriage of my nephew ; but you will consider that of the *uncle* strictly confidential ; for, otherwise, neither the house nor the village would contain him. As a test of my *present* feelings, Mr. Fornham, I shall send you a three dozen hamper of the best brown sherry of the excellent firm of Shaw, Maxwell, and Co., and when we come to drive the *clenching nail*

home, we will talk—not about golden pippins, but golden *sovereigns*. Farewell, and prosper.”

It were no affectation to say, that, for a little moment, Fornham found his “thank ye” sticking in his throat, as Macbeth did his “Amen.” The frankness, the decision, the warmth of feeling of his employer and patron, had well merited, as they elicited, his deepest feelings of gratitude and respect. He “got out” something: and the Major was infinitely gratified—while Fornham darted home like a man bursting with happiness. He encountered, or rather almost ran against, the venerable butler and his spouse, on their returning from “*de propagandá*” mission. Mr. Thorpe eyed him with increased amazement. Fornham seemed, to his apprehension, to have grown in size, as well as increased in rapidity of movement, since they last met: and their astonishment was beyond bounds, when the lawyer (for so Fornham must now be designated) said, “I have not a moment to spare;” being too happy to escape the further interrogations of this aged pair.

While the “note of preparation” was about to be struck in the most effectual manner by Fornham, the Magnates of the village or parish were preparing a round of visits or rural occupations which could not fail to give an additional *éclat* to the bridal day. But THE COUPLE themselves had a tri-

fling ordeal to sustain. They were again resolved, (Caroline for the fourth time), to enter the mysterious chapel attached to Thornborough Abbey. There was now, however, no especial ceremony to go through : and they entered those deserted, and in part mouldering walls, with a feeling and a step essentially different from what they had before experienced. Julia Cranmer insisted upon accompanying them, to which no reasonable objection could be made ; but it was resolved that neither Tyndale nor Jemima Ponton should be of the party. On a careful survey of what might have been formerly the vestry, Reginald observed in it an old chest, evidently cut out of the trunk of one tree ; guarded with ribs of iron, and profusely studded with nails. The lock had been wrenched away : and the contents seemed to consist entirely of old surplices and battered chalices. A very faint smell was emitted on its being opened, and Reginald thought it as prudent to desist from further examination. But the curiosity of his sister, once roused, knew neither modification nor abatement ; and she ran home for the assistance of Tom Crane, who brought a large pole or stick to turn over the contents of the trunk.

The party proceeded with their work of exploration. One surplice after another was turned out : then came a fifth surplice, apparently much soiled

or spotted—chiefly about the upper part. It had a black look: what could it mean? They went on, when the pole struck against something hard and resisting. A scream of horror attested the development of a human skull—with every tooth of the departed—but all the flesh having entirely shrunk away. An echo to their scream was distinctly heard in the chancel. For a little moment, Reginald's presence of mind forsook him; and both Caroline and Julia were about to rush from this abode of death, as having been guilty of a sacrilegious visit: when a second reflection explained, if it did not reconcile, every thing. The skull was the head of the clergyman who was shot at the altar in the republican times, and the stained, or soiled surplice, was the natural colour of human blood, after so many years had elapsed from the commission of the crime. Whoever has happened to see the handkerchief of King William III, at Cashiobury, stained with the blood of the wound received by him at the battle of the Boyne, will observe the same tint or colour as was upon this surplice. Crane was entreated to desist from all further attempt, and the whole party left the place as if shocked at what they had seen. It was difficult, however, to restrain the roused curiosity, and love of enterprize, of Tom Crane; who, desiring permission to remain within the chapel a short

time longer, happened to strike something in the same chest, which *rang* as it was touched, and which proved to be a rich sacramental cup and patten, silver gilt, with the armorial bearings of Charles I.—an undoubted gift from that unfortunate monarch to the former possessor of Thornborough Abbey—perhaps not long after he had received the sacrament in the chapel, and slept at the residence.

But for matter connected with the living.—It was a settled thing that a few LONDON VISITORS should grace the festivities of the bridal day; or, at all events, should take, perhaps, this last opportunity of enjoying the society of Reginald and Caroline, separately or together: for, it was almost finally settled that, on their marriage, the happy pair should go abroad, and pass the winter at Rome; perhaps in company with Charles Ponton and his bride, if they could prevail upon them to stay.

“Away with you, both!” the Major would often say—“while you are young and active, and while the cares of a family are yet in the back ground. Away with you!—but do not stoop to kiss the toe of the Pope. Remember your COUNTRY and your RELIGION under whatever star your destinies may be.” But this is premature. Among the expected visitors was Christopher Comberbach, Esq., the tutor of Reginald Cranmer at St. John’s

College, Oxford; who had long tarried abroad, but was now firmly seated in one of the professors' chairs. The master and pupil had not met for five years. Mr. Comberbach was strictly a man of letters; having written both in the Quarterly and Edinburgh Reviews, upon subjects purely of the *belles-lettres* description. He hated *politics* and hated *science* with equal cordiality. The latter was a strange hatred, and unquestionably based upon a very narrow foundation: but it applied chiefly to objects of use. He declared that not one sheet of good paper had been made, since the odious introduction of bags of cotton, and the artificial dressing of plaister of Paris, and muriatic acid: and he quoted the celebrated *Lady Lucan's illustrated Shakspeare*, as a triumphant corroboration of his remark.

"See," he would say, "your sixpenny cotton gowns!—rotting at the first wash: look at your stockings; a great hole is in the rear: they are dressed and prepared by a process of *cheating*. As to silk, it is an insult to talk of it. Where are your knitters, sitting in the sun, and carolling their roundelays, while the substantial work grew beneath their agile fingers, and served their husbands or their sons for a *leash* of winters at the least! And then your *vegetable* colours!—rich and dazzling enough—but as evanescent as dazzling! I

would have an act of parliament that all colours used in linen should be strictly mineral. We want not cheapness ; we want *durability*."

While Mr. Comberbach took up his quarters at Thornborough Abbey, the region of Hasleby Park was doomed to be again illumined by the presence of the *Phlosboterotontodon* Doctor of Divinity at Oxford. Dr. Glossop had a sincere regard for his relation, Mrs. Ponton ; and as Charles, who never disguised his love of quizzing him, had taken his departure, the Squire gave the renowned Doctor a sitting-room to himself, to muse, to read, to write, and to—smoke in. He came down, armed in his own opinion with fullerpowers of argumentation than he had ever before possessed, and was burning almost with vengeance for a renewal of the contest with his magisterial opponent, Mr. Clutterbuck. A third stranger, of the name of Marsfield, had taken up his residence at Dacre Hall. This gentleman was confessedly a *virtuoso*, having considerable powers in a practised pencil of his own, but learned in pictorial lore beyond most of his age. Giotto, Cimabue, and Donatelli, came as promptly to his call as Michael Angelo, Raffaele, and Correggio. The Sistine chapel was always presenting a glorious vision to his mind's eye. The Loggio was the paradise of the pencil ; while of Giorgione, Titian, Domenichino, Guido, and Tintoret, he seemed to be

conversant with almost every production. He usually carried with him six little chubby quarto volumes of minute memoranda ; and if you presumed to maintain a position, or to specify the locality of a picture, our virtuoso *booked* you in a moment. He, like Mrs. Thorpe, was a *texter* in his way.

Mrs. Cranmer led the way to the dinner-parties, by an invitation to all the gentlemen before-named (with the exception of Dr. Glossop and Mr. Marsfield), to associate at Thornborough Abbey by six o'clock. She was both partial and punctual to this hour. She would have cheerfully asked Mr. Marsfield, but the Major dreaded his "six chubby quartos ;" and it was thought that Dr. Glossop, at the *first* village meeting, might have exhibited an *outbreak*, not very pleasant to the party. The Vicar and the Curate were necessarily at this important *début* of private merry-makings. Reginald took the bottom of his mother's table ; and Major Dacre sat at the right, and the Vicar at the left hand, of the lady president. Caroline Ponton would, of necessity, be at Reginald's right hand ; and Mrs. Markham was his left hand neighbour. It is not necessary to marshal these forces in a more particular array ; but just before dinner, at the express entreaty of Mr. Comberbach, the HAND of ARCHBISHOP CRANMER—just as it lay in the box

—was formally introduced and expatiated upon, with equal interest and intelligence. It seemed as if Reginald's tutor inclined to the opinion of Mr. Clutterbuck ; but the Major, after what had passed, chose to keep his lips hermetically sealed, as to the identity, or otherwise.

After dinner, the subject of the “offending hand” of the Archbishop was again introduced ; and it seemed to be but natural that the discourse should take a turn upon the character of the individual to whom that hand was once attached. The “Man of Letters” led the way, with Reginald's eye steadily fixed upon him.

“It has always seemed to me,” said Mr. Comberbach, “a most unaccountable, to speak the least harshly, as well as most unmanly thing, that Archbishop Cranmer should have brought his fine, strong faculties, to the concoction of *any* recantation. I use the word deliberately—for there were not fewer than *five* of these recantations which he brought his mind to subscribe and to publish—each increasing in abjectness and absurdity. I can conceive an *ordinary* understanding, with the prospect of life before it, subscribing to any exaction, however base and ignominious—but for THOMAS CRANMER !”

“Do you not think that he was in a great measure circumvented, and led on by hopes which his

persecutors knew at the time were never likely to be realized?" observed the Vicar.

"That, sir, is only *accounting* for the thing; and makes the shame the greater for having yielded to the temptation. To such a man as Cranmer, and in such a cause, DEATH WAS GAIN."

"To die is gain," said the Curate—in a quiet tone, quoting the language of St. Paul.*

"Just so, sir; for, in the history of all martyrdoms, death is the last thing to be dreaded. St. Paul, to take your authority, would have told the executioner, with his suspended sword, to 'strike'—rather than have received life upon the terms of a Cranmerian recantation. And about the time of the Archbishop himself—fifty years one way or another—remember the incomparable serenity of soul and fixedness of purpose of such men as Sir Thomas More and Sir Walter Raleigh. They mounted the scaffold as calmly as we have all walked into this dining-room. Indeed, the latter was obliged to tell the executioner to finish his work—which he had so bunglingly commenced."

"Consider too, sir," observed the Vicar, "the heroic conduct of most of the sufferers who died during the Smithfield persecution!"

"I do, sir; but to speak my mind freely and

* Phil. i. 21.

incerely, I never did consider martyrdom a *test of ruth.*"

"To be sure not," replied Major Dacre; "because men of the most adverse principles have died on the avowal of the same religion. Far be it from me to rake up the embers of Papistical or of Protestant persecution. Let us hope every spark of combustion is extinguished for ever."

"Such must be the prayer of every devout Christian, and of every patriotic Englishman,"—rejoined the Curate; but, what will you say to the spirit which *baited the trap*, Mr. Comberbach?"

"As every honest man would say, I should hope. It was utterly base and diabolical; but I must fairly tell you, that, in this instance, I think the Queen was comparatively a passive instrument; and that Cranmer's blood alone could satisfy the insatiable maw of her husband and Bishop Bonner—which latter, it is clear, was *flagellator-general* of all Protestant heretics."

"But Mary signed the warrant for his execution?" said the Vicar.

"And so did Elizabeth the death-warrants of the Queen of Scotland and Lord Essex. *That* won't much assist the argument."

"I must confess," said Mr. Clutterbuck, "that the darkest blot in the escutcheon of my friend Reginald Cranmer's illustrious ancestor is, not only

his deliberate recantations ; but at the last moment—and almost with the smell of fire beneath his nostrils—he should revert to his *first* position and former life, and *recant* his *recantations* ! This seemed so tricky, and unaccountable, as to neutralize or throw into the shade the value of all his first recantations.” In fact, it was a vacillation almost puerile.

“ Would you have had him died deliberately a *Papist* ? ” said the Curate.

“ Was the avowal of *Protestantism* worth any thing after his papistical recantation ? ” rejoined the magistrate.*

* “ At the stake, he professed that he died in all such opinions as he had taught, and oft *repented him of his recantation*. Coming to the stake, with a cheerful countenance and willing mind, he put off his garments with haste, and stood up right in his shirt ; and a bachelor of divinity, named Elye, of Brazen-Nose College, laboured to convert him to his former *recantation*, with the two Spanish friars ; but when the friars saw his constancy, they said in Latin, one to another, ‘ *Let us go from him, we ought not to be nigh him, for the devil is with him.* ’ * * * Whereupon, the Lord Williams cried ‘ make short, make short.’ Then the bishop took certain of his friends by the hand, but the bachelor of divinity refused to take him by the hand, and blamed all others that so did, and said, that he was sorry he ever came in his company ; and yet again he required him to agree to his *former recantation*. And the bishop answered, showing his hand, — ‘ *This is the hand that wrote it, and therefore, shall it first suffer punishment.* ’ ”

Todd's Life of Cranmer, vol. ii. p. 405.

Mr. Comberbach continued: "We had better not scrutinize the last end of this amiable and truly eminent man, with too microscopic an eye. One thing is palpably certain: his accusation and his punishment were alike horrible to truth and to humanity. Hume calls it most properly, an 'act of barbarity:' rendered, I will say, more barbarous from the gilded bait by which its wickedness was concealed. That Cranmer should have spurned the proffered pardon—and thrown every iota of recantation to the winds of heaven—or in the faces of such men-butchers as Bonner and Cole—is evident enough to every dispassionate and honourable mind. When he said, in something like a burst of heroic suffering, that his right hand had offended, he spake the truth, but not the whole or the real truth. It was his SPIRIT,—his MIND,—the '*pars melior*' of human nature—which had in reality offended.' The hand was but the passive or mechanical instrument by which the dictates or impulse of that mind was made known. It was a fine apostrophe in Cranmer to throw the whole blame upon the subscribing hand...but his HEAD or his HEART was the real sinner."

The Vicar remarked, that, as set forth by his friend Mr. Todd, (supplied chiefly by the diligent Strype,) the account of Cranmer's degradation, before being brought to the stake, was

very curious, and sufficiently humiliating to the sufferer.

“Why his friend, the biographer, had not ‘made a scourge of small cords’, and laid it about the backs of Bishop Bonner, Dr. Cole, and the Lord Williams, seemed to him quite incomprehensible. Here was one of the most distinguished of England’s primates, a scholar, a divine, a writer of great acuteness, and of the most liberal principles:—clearly a reformer at heart, by marriage, and by connection; who had seen human heads fly off, to the right and to the left, under his sovereign master, Henry the Eighth—and who had himself ‘pursued the even tenor of his way,’ without a stain and without a compromise—here, I say, is this very extraordinary man brought down to Oxford,—as a bull is brought to the ring, to be baited, kicked, cuffed, and tortured,—acquiescing in all the requisitions of his papistical persecutors, each requisition or recantation being more galling and stinging than its precursor. At length he is conducted to the Cathedral of Christ Church, to hear his own *funeral knell*, in other words, a funeral sermon upon himself by Dr. Cole; and the wretched man, at its conclusion, stands up, and makes atonement for all his past *errors of Protestantism*! It is most sad as well as wonderful.”

“Do not, my good sir, continue the subject,

from respect to our young friend, who sits at the bottom of the table; and in whose veins no small portion of the martyr's blood may be yet running"—said Mr. Comberbach: to which his pupil replied,

"Thank you, my dear friend, but all this has been often and often impressed upon me from my own reading;—and yet I would give a good deal to possess what Nicholas Tyndale has so often told me:—the 'first edition of Erasmus's Greek Testament, upon vellum, which was once the property of my illustrious ancestor,* with his own revered autograph in the title-page."

"I would rather have his Greek Testament than his *recantations*," said Tyndale very drily; "although, upon second thoughts, the man who had *such* a treasure, could not do wrong." The company were loud in their admiration of the *orthodoxy* of this speech.

Mr. Comberbach continued: "Mr. Markham has well put the case. There never was any thing so tediously twaddling, and disgusting, as the whole of that proceeding. I should like to have the *names* of *all* with whom Cranmer shook hands, on being led to the stake."

* It is the first volume only; and was purchased at the sale of the library of the late Sir M. M. Sykes, Bart. by the late Archbishop Manners Sutton, for the Lambeth library, where it now rests.

“You have the name of one with whom he was *not* allowed to shake hands,” said the Curate ; “and that was a rare specimen of Brazen-Nose College liberalism, in those days.”

“I should like to see the Brazen-Nose College man in these times who would shake hands with a *Papist* ?”—said Major Dacre, looking right and left very shrewdly.

“At any rate,” said Mr. Comberbach, “Oxford is making a NOBLE ATONEMENT for past heresies, in the Cranmer, Ridley, and Latimer Church, now in the course of being erected ; although, according to my taste, I had much rather have seen a statue, to the memory of each of these illustrious men, erected in different parts of the City :—to be sure, they may have their statues within the church in question.”

Here the Cranmerian conversation seemed naturally to drop—as a fire is extinguished by the consumption of all its bituminous particles. Mrs. Cranmer, and Julia Cranmer in particular, expressed themselves “quite charmed” with the line of argument and store of information supplied by the Man of Letters and the Vicar ; though, to say the truth, there was little or nothing of novelty—as there *could* be none—either in argument or intelligence. In the evening, the sacramental cup and the paten of Charles I., discovered by Crane,

formed a very curious and interesting subject of discussion — a discussion, conducted with great evenness of temper and sobriety of judgment on all sides—even till the clock had struck twelve, and after Mr. Comberbach had given unquestionable proofs of his viewing the character of the royal martyr through the sombre lens of a celebrated article in the *Edinburgh Review*; an article, which astonished the learned, and staggered the prejudiced.

CHAPTER VII.

MAJOR DACRE PROPOSES—SYMPOSIUM AT
HASLEBY PARK.

THE parties were so well pleased with the tone of after-dinner conversation at the Abbey, that they each secretly longed for a continuation of such a "feast of reason." Major Dacre, in consideration of what had taken place on a preceding day between Mr. Clutterbuck and himself, purposely kept in the back-ground during the Cranmerian discussion; but, in fact, the "Man of Letters" and the Vicar, as if by a tacit and general consent, grasped that topic between their own hands; and perhaps left very little to add to it.

The time of Mr. Comberbach was likely to be short at the Abbey. If possible, he would stop till the marriage of his pupil with Miss Ponton; but much depended upon circumstances over which he had no control. The Major, however, conformably with his unvarying maxim, of "striking the iron while it was hot," was about to issue a

summons "for a Dacre Hall banquet," but had been anticipated by Squire Ponton; who named the following Saturday for a renewal of this attic symposium. Although, himself, little or nothing versed in literature and its concomitants, the Squire had a sincere pleasure in promoting intellectual topics on all occasions. He could *start* game of this kind, if he could not pursue or bring it down; and he took infinite delight in calling forth the powers of his *Phlosboterotontodon* friend, Dr. Glossop, upon every fitting occasion. He was determined that the forthcoming dinner should call forth all his energies.

But we must make a trifling digression: and yet not exactly so, for the preliminaries of a marriage may be of as much importance as the preliminaries of a dinner. It will be remembered that, a few weeks back, we introduced our gallant Major enjoying the luxuries of a morning-walk in Spring—when the blossoms and leaves seemed to be contending with each other for the mastery, and when

"The voice of the *turtle* was heard in the grove."

He had a companion to partake of the luxuries of that morning-walk; and that companion, it may be also remembered, was the widow Danvers, of Woodbine Lodge. A scene of tenderness ensued—not exactly followed up by a proposal of mar-

riage ; but by a proposal of settling one hundred per annum on the endeared object of his attention. What dissonant note, from what boding bird, it was, that led to a courteous but fixed non-compliance with this generous offer, I have never been able to ascertain. Whether a refusal of it might lead to a renewal of the request upon more liberal terms—or whether the lady actually and really thought that a settlement of a very *different* description might follow its rejection—may possibly linger in the reader's mind ; but most assuredly it did happen that the draft of the marriage settlement between Major Dacre and Mrs. Danvers was actually in the possession of the former, before the important preliminary monosyllable of “ Yes ” or “ No ” had been distinctly ascertained.

The Major's barouche was at Woodbine Lodge on the morning of the Saturday of Squire Ponton's dinner-party ; and Mrs. Danvers was watering a favourite clustre of carnations as it stopped at the door. “ To fall in love with the fair sex,” says the gallant Brantome,* “ you should see them when they don't think to be seen.” It is a quaint, and perhaps not very profound, remark ; but certainly to the eye of Major Dacre his intended spouse never did before look so interesting, and so almost “ magical.” (His own word is quoted.)

* *Femmes Illustres.*

Whether it was the gracefulness of the attitude of pouring—whether it was the primitive simplicity of the occupation—or whether the neatness of the dress, and the *takingness* of the *tout ensemble*—certain it was, that Major Dacre stopped—and said nothing.

“A fine morning, sir! You are out betimes.”

“Because I have much to do, and particularly at Woodbine Lodge.”

Mrs. Danvers smiled, and approached the carriage as if to make believe to assist the Major down. He sprung out at a bound, and was upon the gravel walk with the lady. He pulled out his folio bundle secured by red tape, and without further ceremony gave vent to what was labouring in his breast, by the following address.

“Mrs. Danvers, you will be pleased to bear in mind that, a few months back, you did me the honour of a morning call, when, on accompanying you to your chair, I took away a small bundle of papers like these, and said, on their rejection by yourself, that they should be supplied by something more substantial?”

“I have no recollection of the latter circumstance; only that I took those papers from under the carriage-seat, and placed them in your hands, accompanied by an expression of heartfelt thankfulness”—and here the widow made a salutation by a slight courtesy.

“ You did,” and the Major returned the salute. “ The immediate, and indeed the sole object of my present visit, is, to submit to your most earnest consideration a settlement which involves deeper interests, and protects you when I shall be no more.”

“ How, sir? I do not understand you.”

“ Mrs. Danvers, I hate a *circumbendibus* siege. I am for opening the trenches, and the mouths of the cannons at once. Can you love me as a HUSBAND?”

“ How! sir?—let me retire within.” Mrs. Danvers rushed to the sofa, and on being seated, covered her face with her hands. Her whole frame was evidently convulsed; but her right hand was separated in due time, and extended towards her wooer; keeping the left still over her face, which was resting on the extremity of the sofa. The man who talked of hating a lingering siege, was not likely to leave this separated hand *unattached*; and he pressed it to his lips, as if it were the token and seal of consent. He then rose to depart, as if fearful of carrying his first successful assault too far; but Mrs. Danvers mustered up all the virtuous courage of a grateful heart, and addressed the gallant lover thus:—

“ Major Dacre, it would be only insulting you to string together a parcel of common set words and phrases to express—not only my gratitude—but

my AFFECTION. I am proud and happy to call a man like yourself my HUSBAND. It is not because you raise me from humble mediocrity, to comparative splendour of condition, that I say so ; but because I have invariably found in you the gentleman and the man of worth : and I will further add, that your attentions to me have been uniformly marked and kind. Don't ask me to read these papers. I will have nothing to do with *money matters*. You are to be my HUSBAND, and my protector. I ask no more."

The Major sat down, and eyeing the " caught bird" with the fondness and humanity of a true sportsman, exclaimed, " My dear Isabella (for, as Mr. Ribblesworth is not here, I may venture so to address you), your language and your sentiments do honour to your sex ; do honour to *yourself* ; and in whom all that is amiable and interesting in that sex, has, in my estimation, long concentrated. God bless you ! and prosper our union"—and he embraced her, without either right or left hand covering her face. Then, springing up with the agility of his nephew, he said, " these papers shall go home with me, and you shall know nothing of their contents till after you have affixed your signature to them. Can you listen to a merry thought ?"

" If I cannot *now*, when am I ever likely so to do ?"

"We will be married on the same day with my nephew."

Mrs. Danvers opened her eyes to their very extremities.

"Yes, yes ; so let it be."

"This is all very droll."

"And very delightful ! Say so."

"It is—it *is* ; for it would be hypocrisy to say otherwise. A widow's *trussot* should be of limited extent ; and the extra gear is easily to be obtained from our friend, Dalton's, in Regent Street."

"Write—write, this very night, for everything you want ; and tell it all to be put down in the name of MRS. DACRE ! For myself, my happiness, humanly speaking, is complete. We shall meet again this evening,"—and he sought his carriage, to the joy of the coachman and horses which had been *daudling* there the better part of an hour.

When Homer is about to describe any great and stirring event, in the way of a battle upon a large scale, he usually makes a special invocation to the Muse ; calling on her to record in a marked and emphatic manner the achievement of the hero, or heroes, or the number and rank of the slain. With the Mæonian-bard in my mind's eye, I venture to call upon somebody, or something, not very dissimilar from a "recording Muse," to help me in

the notification of the *logomachy*, or “war of words,” which marked the after-part of the SYMPOSIUM AT HASLEBY PARK; and yet, not exactly WAR—but a conflicting interchange of sentiment, or principle, manifested during the discussion which took place. The reader may perhaps think that this paraphrastic definition is little short of war?

Mr. Clutterbuck, the magistrate, was the first to make his appearance at the Squire’s, who introduced him with great formality to his ancient antagonist, Dr. Glossop. On saluting, it was evident that the magistrate’s mouth retained a little of its obliquity. He essayed to get it into drawing—but his *Phlosboterontodon* antagonist, after a slight inclination, or equivocal stoop of the body, directed his attention to another quarter—then, apparently forgetting himself, he made up to the magistrate, and apologized for not having before inquired after Mrs. Freshwater. Mr. Clutterbuck was struck of a heap. What had he to do with *fresh water* or *salt water*?” Now, this was almost downright rude; and the magistrate resolved, secretly, and perhaps a little savagely, to have his revenge of this palpable insult.

The whole party of gentlemen (for the ladies were to follow in the evening) were well and fairly seated, to the number of a round dozen, at the table by half-past six. Lord Ashton and Sir Benjamin

Burridge in the number; Mr. Comberbach and Reginald Cranmer; the Major and Mr. Marsfield; the Vicar and the Curate; Mr. Ruffham and Mr. Tyndale, with the lady of the mansion and her incomparable daughter. Mr. Clutterbuck at dinner exchanged a vinous shot with the renowned Oxford divine, by asking him most civilly and pointedly to "drink a *bumper* with him." This was very unusual at dinner; but Dr. Glossop was at bottom (ay, and at top too) a very good-natured man, and he accepted the challenge both readily and joyously.

"Shall it be *hock*?—that is the beverage of a true churchman."

"It shall be what Dr. Glossop pleases, but I know not why any *particular* genus of wine should be the mark of the characteristic of a true churchman."

They saluted, and drank. An unusual flow of spirits seemed to prevail on all sides; but still it was evident that the *Phlosboterotontodon* Doctor was *laying by* for the production of his "battering-ram." Reginald Cranmer would be exclusively devoted to Caroline Ponton. Mr. Marsfield said something about the palpable copy of the Titian-Florentine Venus exhibited in Pall Mall some two years gone by.

"Call you that a palpable copy, sir?" said

Dr. Glossop to the astonishment of the whole party.

“I do, sir, and he shall be a bold man who maintains its legitimacy.”

“Then, sir, I maintain it.”

Mrs. Ponton and Caroline softly looked at each other, dreading, or anticipating, a lengthened discussion upon the subject in question; but Major Dacre cut the matter short by requesting Mr. Marsfield to inform the company where *all* the genuine Venuses, by Titian, were deposited: and Mr. Marsfield, nothing loath, went through a *catalogue raisonné* of their localities, concluding with the remark, that “it was surprising how little the English knew of foreign art.”

“*Little*, sir!” retorted Dr. Glossop; “when their cabinets are full of them? Show me, abroad, such collections as those of the Royal, the Marquis of Westminster, the Duke of Sutherland, Lord Francis Egerton, Sir Robert Peel ——”

“Hold! hold! my worthy Doctor, you will string together half the magnates in the kingdom, if you lengthen the bead-roll of collectors”—observed the magistrate; “but, why do you omit the Duke of Devonshire?”

“Ignorance, sir, pure ignorance; as Johnson said to an opponent who asked him why he had omitted a very common-place word in his Dictionary.”

“And pray, Dr. Glossop, why have you omitted our National Gallery?” observed the Major.

“In good sooth, I know not; but the fine arts are not the element for my *Phlosboterotontodon* to breathe in.”

“Talking of the Gallery,” said Mr. Comberbach to Mr. Marsfield, “I own, that, while I am far from worshipping the first-rate talent which shines there, I do enter my ready and stern protest against the admission of pictures which *ought not* to be there—and the reception of those, which, to gratify the donor’s vanity or caprice, are received from courtesy; but which are unworthy to find a station there.”

Mr. Marsfield was ruffling all his plumage as the turkey-cock, to meet such a charge; but Squire Ponton observed, with admirable good humour and opportune tact, “there will be no end to such a discussion; the viands will get cold, and the wine will get hot; pray, Mr. Marsfield, what do you think of our friend’s, the Major’s, limited collection?”

“I am charmed with it—instructed by it—on the score of national intelligence and purity of condition. There is only one other similar collection which surpasses it, and that is at Althorp.”

“Do you not consider the portrait of Lady Arabella Dacre, by Vandyke, a master-piece?”—said

Nicholas Tyndale, in a sly and saucy manner, at the bottom of the table, fixing his eyes pretty steadily upon Caroline Ponton.

“ Sir,” said the graphic critic, eyeing in turn that same lady, “ I should say that, with a very slender alteration of drapery and head-dress, I was gazing on the REAL Lady Arabella on contemplating Miss Ponton !”

It is difficult to say who felt the more—Reginald Cranmer or his Intended ? The former shouted aloud : “ Bravo, bravo ! Mr. Marsfield, let us have a bumper together after that glorious remark ;” and the latter, colouring to the very ends of her fingers, and holding down her head, as if she had been guilty of some scarcely pardonable *gaucherie*. Luckily the dinner was nearly terminating ; and Mrs. Ponton and her daughter seemed to be glad to get away—not to disturb the current of general conversation. They might have both staid—and been gratified, if not benefitted—by the result.

“ Well, Dr. Glossop,” said Major Dacre, resolved to set some good solid topic afloat, “ have you thought again of what occurred at our last symposium in this hospitable mansion ?”

“ Sir, I have had so many things to think about and to talk about in these ever-bustling times—that I have forgotten at this moment—”

“ No matter, no matter,” said Sir Benjamin Bur-

ridge—" Dr. Glossop is never at a loss to start a subject. What are they about at Oxford? Romanism, Roman Catholicism, or Protestantism?"

" Sir, there will never be peace to the Church of England till there be a general *Convocation of Divines*. They must meet: and all pull the same way."

" Command the waves of the ocean to roll backwards, that's all:" said Mr. Clutterbuck, somewhat abruptly and tartly.

" Sir, they *will* roll backwards if they meet with a *resisting* force."

" Ay, sir; but hear the thunder of the repercussion, and view the agitation and height of the spray! Your house may be buried beneath its violence!" observed the Magistrate—now fairly screwed up to the contest.

The Vicar calmly and wisely interposed: " Dr. Glossop, when you express yourself desirous of a *Convocation of Divines*, you seem not only to forget the times of the two Charles's and the fate of Archbishop Laud, but—"

" May *my* fate be like unto his!" exclaimed the excited Doctor of Divinity; " for Laud had two virtues for one vice."

" The question, sir," continued the Vicar, in the same calm tone of utterance, " is not whether Laud had two virtues for one vice, or two vices for one

virtue, but whether your General Convocation would not add ridicule to certain failure, and contempt for the *cloth*, as well as the *wearer* of that cloth? In these times, such a convocation could do nothing—absolutely nothing; and I feel persuaded that neither of our Archbishops would give it the sanction of his countenance.”

“There, my dear Vicar,” said Mr. Thomson, the Curate, “I differ from you; wholly and essentially differ.”

“Differ or agree, my dear friends, it should seem that the learned Doctor has forgotten the opinion of his favourite—the great Lord Clarendon—upon the worth of such a meeting.”

“Speak, sir; what says that great man upon such a subject?” exclaimed the Oxford disputant.

“Sir, he says this—if not in exact words, in absolute sense—that the clergy are the most inefficient of all bodies of men to settle civil affairs, being ignorant of the world, and, in some instances, very self-willed.”

“Sir, it is a libel—an absolute libel—upon the profession”—exclaimed the *Phlosboterotontodon* antagonist.

“By no means,” remarked the Major, with excellent tact; “it may be called a compliment to that pious and worthy body of men. Their business with the world is to dispossess that world of its

baser ingredients, and to make it instrumental to finding out the road to heaven. They have nothing to do with its *polity*—but every thing with the passions and waywardness of those by whom that polity is guided. The fashion of this world, we are told, soon passeth away ; and insurrection, rapine, and revolution, all equally contribute to its mutations and subversion. Speaking truly, although perhaps somewhat paradoxically, the rule of a good clergyman is absolutely despotic in *effect*, although made up of the gentlest elements ; for he finds the way to the human heart, and receives, or ought to receive, from that heart, the promptest and most unqualified surrender. If his circle of action be limited (which it is *not*), his sway and influence within that circle may be uncontrolled, and of inestimable value. But, let us have no *Convocation of Divines*. Collision chafes, and excitement leads to certain error. It made Laud a tyrant. Naturally, that archbishop had a warm as well as a liberal heart.”

Dr. Glossop was evidently vexed at Lord Clarendon being quoted against him, and somehow or the other adopted a less positive and dogmatical tone ; but yet he was fierce against those who would fasten the charge of *Papacy* upon what are called the supporters of the Apostolical and Catholic Church. Here was a vent, which would not have been

closed—even after the discussion of the whole evening.

“Certainly,” said Mr. Thomson, “it is sad—most sad—to see well-meaning as well as well-read men, each of the Protestant persuasion, splitting hairs upon such really subtle and secondary points. The Bible is large enough to admit of every honest scruple and of every conscientious opinion. The symptom of the times, upon this subject, is alarming as well as melancholy. There is a sort of argumentative butchery going on, both between known and unknown assailants, that is truly harassing to a conscientious believer. By the one party the Fathers are upheld as being little short of inspired men, and the Scriptures to be alone received through the channels of their writings; while, by the other party, the Fathers seem to be bearded in the most offensive manner, and to be treated as little better than designedly treacherous guides. Again; by the first-named party the Reformation has been pronounced to be a rebellion; and yet the abettors of that opinion fling back the imputation of Papacy with scorn and indignation. By the latter party the Reformers are held up almost to unqualified and idolatrous admiration. Now, this is a new heresy in the church; and its course is so tortuous and strange, that you can hardly venture to predict its probable result. Grace, faith, and election, used

to be the grand staple commodities of controversy ; but these are now merged or forgotten in Romanism and Protestantism."

The effect of these observations, delivered with great modesty by the speaker, was palpable: while it seemed to reconcile many little discrepancies of opinion, it furnished matter for instantaneous and general argument. Dr. Glossop was evidently getting his "battering ram" in order, and Mr. Comberbach was as evidently pointing his cannon to oppose it, when the Squire good-naturedly observed, from the top of the table—which he would necessarily assume on the departure of the ladies—that he thought the best way to reconcile all differences, and to heal all outbreaks, was, that, on the two next vacancies upon the bench, her Majesty should promote Doctors Turton and Hampden to fill up the vacancies. They were men of talent, piety, and worth. What signified little shot-silk shades of difference of colour? The MATERIAL was sound and durable.

As one, who sees the glare of a tiger's eye in the jungle, denoting the coming spring—even so looked Dr. Glossop at this recommendation of the consummation of heresy on the part of his hospitable friend.

"My dear sir—my dear Squire Ponton—my good fellow—my honest Christian—you are sounding a rebellious note," said the Oxford divine.

“As how, sir?” replied the elastic Tyndale. “The latter was my tutor, and I have benefitted alike by his instructions and his example. God grant that I may see him where his own worth and his own talents have long pointed him out *fit* to be—upon the Bench of Bishops. His lectures, ‘his glorious lectures,’ said a friend to him, in writing—and that friend subsequently forming one of the council of his *persecutors*. Of the ‘Bampton Lectures,’ I am perhaps not competent to speak with the same confidence which I can of his late ‘Inaugural Lecture;’ a composition, which may challenge even the searching glance and the critical acumen of Dr. Glossop.”

“Young man,” immediately rejoined the *Phlosboterontodon* champion; “in that lecture I have sad fears that the lecturer acted——”

“How! sir?” exclaimed Tyndale, absolutely jumping up from his seat.

“*Acted*, sir—as *you* are now acting: not with your usual good sense and propriety of bearing,” replied the *Phlosboterontodon*.

Mr. Clutterbuck could contain no longer.

“Do you mean to say, Dr. Glossop, that Dr. Hampden, in that lecture, did not think, and write, and speak, as he absolutely *felt*? If his principles were so broad, and his language so pure and correct, that no hearer could doubt its mean-

ing or gainsay its truth, I desire to know why human breasts are supposed to be endowed with superhuman powers, on annexing a meaning, or drawing a conclusion, the lecturer neither meant nor inferred? This—this—‘was the unkindest cut of all!’”

“A cut, I presume you would infer, to be *healed* only by a bishopric!”—answered the Doctor, and throwing back his head, as if he fancied he had clenched the nail of his antagonist’s argument.

“A cut,” remarked Mr. Comberbach, “which will always be felt more acutely by his *opponents* than by *himself*. Why my Lord Melbourne keeps this excellent man so long in a *Shadrach, Meshach*, and *Abednego* furnace, is matter of absolute astonishment to me. But his classes increase in number and in power. Then again, as to Dr. Turton: what has a prime minister ever to dread from the elevation of a pure and good and honest man, gifted as is that excellent Regius Professor of Divinity, with talents of no common calibre—to the Bench of Bishops! Indeed, the situation of each Professor is singular. Here is a *Whig*, and there is a *Tory*, Regius Professor of Divinity; and each is passed over more than once or twice in the filling up of the episcopal ranks. Away with these petty and short-lived distinctions!—the fungus growth of a moment!—which should be brushed off,

and for ever, by the ready hand of a resolute Premier !”

An absolute clamour of voices ensued. Sir Benjamin Burridge was drawing an arrow to its head against the Oxford Professor, and Lord Ashton had got a stone in his sling to hurl at the head of the Cambridge Professor, for his reply to his friend Lord Brougham’s Natural Theology ; while Mr. Ruffham was preparing a healing plaister to apply to the gashes inflicted upon Dr. Wiseman’s back by the Turtonian lash — when the Squire called repeatedly to order. Reginald Cranmer, who had listened with uncommon attention to all sides of the argument, shouted out, “ *Claudite jam rivos!*” adding, “ Mr. Ponton, here is a health to your son, Charles—though this may not be considered in the purest state, as it includes that of my sister Marianne—yet I will repeat ‘ the happy pair ! ’ ”

“ Thank you—a thousand thanks,” said the host ;
“ but my hands are tied.”

“ Mine are not, though ;” exclaimed Tyndale ;
but anon : and they drank to the man and wife,
Charles and Marianne Ponton.

“ Come, come, sir,” said the Oxford Doctor in Divinity, “ there is neither heresy nor heterodoxy here—and I will propose a concluding toast ‘ the speedy and happy union of Mr. Reginald Cranmer

with your elder daughter' — three times three!" They drank and were merry.

Thus ended one of the sharpest controversial discussions which had ever taken place at Hasleby Park. Dr. Glossop, in spite of every subsequent effort, seemed to afford evidence that he had somewhat the worst of the fray; and he almost accused Mr. Thomson of betraying "the good cause." He could not sit comfortably; the chair was too small, the room was too hot; he preferred a saunter upon the lawn: but the ladies had all arrived, at the old fashioned hour of nine, and the gentlemen were quickly in attendance.

The reader, towards the end of the first volume of our labours, can have scarcely failed to notice the habits and customs of the three great mansions of this village, in a little English music, towards the close of the evening. The squire and his lady loved these harmless ebullitions of feeling; and most of the party still held in remembrance the achievements of Reginald Cranmer and Miss Ponton, on a former occasion.* Julia Cranmer was compelled to be absent,—simply because Sir Benjamin Burridge was compelled to be present. The baronet on entering the drawing-room, made up to the mother, for they had not met since the memorable *brusquerie* at the Horticultural Gardens.†

* Vol. i. p. 109.

† Vol. ii. p. 275.

"Is Miss Cranmer in good health? I do not see her here."

"No, Sir Benjamin, she rarely ventures out of a Saturday night"—

"Except to the Opera, when in London."

"You are pleased to be facetious."

"I am pleased to be serious in my inquiries about the well-doing of Miss Cranmer,"—said the Baronet very emphatically, and turned to get the orchestra ready for the singers."

"Can I forget, Miss Ponton," said the Vicar, "how sweetly you and our friend Mr. Cranmer sung,

"Love in thine eyes for ever plays,"

at the vicarage, a few months ago? May I venture to ask for a repetition of it?"

"To be sure you may," said the Squire, "and I am as sure that Reginald will unite in the performance."

"He must be now *au-fait* in the matter," said Major Dacre.

This happy couple, happy under every consideration of worldly felicity, placed themselves at the piano, and sung it most effectively.

"What a parcel of *fibs* they have been telling," said Tyndale; "in fact, every feeling is just the *reverse* with them, of what the words of the song *imply*. The rule of contrary for ever!"

All tongues are silent and all ears are opened, while Reginald Cranmer and Mrs. Danvers sing

“The horns are sounding merrily;”

The Squire could scarcely control his feelings—adding, “I wish, my dear fellow, Charles were only here to join the chorus.”

“He is better employed where he *is*,” smartly replied Lord Ashton. To the astonishment, and even delight, of the whole party, the renowned *Phlosboterotontodon* Doctor was prevailed upon to give them a song from the masque of Milton’s Comus :

“By the hollow casks we’re told,
How the waning night grows old.”

They had no notion of the power of his voice.

“If he could argue as he could sing,” said Mr. Clutterbuck, most unguardedly and unadvisedly, “he would be a most formidable opponent.” It had been better if this had been repeated beyond the hearing of the Doctor, but it was *not*; and therefore, quietly walking up to his critic, and planting himself immediately before him, he sternly and firmly said—“Mr. Clutterbuck, whatever powers of voice or of argument I may possess, I shall take care, on a future occasion, to exercise neither in your presence;—and so, sir, I wish you a good night;” and he sought his bed-chamber.

Altogether, this was a most unlucky *contretemps*,

and Mr. Clutterbuck should certainly have made the remark wholly to himself, or in the softest tone of voice imaginable to the bystanders. He had nothing to say in reply to the Doctor's commentary ; and as his rudeness (for the Magistrate was sensibly alive to the nicest points of honour) had deprived the company of the Doctor's presence, he followed the retiring guest to his bed-chamber. But the Doctor had commenced the operation of undressing. His night-cap, with a pendant tassel, was upon his head—his neck was dispossessed of the cravat,—his knee-strings were untied,—and he was quite absorbed in the contemplation of his bed. A rap at the door : " Enter ! " —and Mr. Clutterbuck entered. The seceder was both sullen and surprised. " How is this, sir ? Is my bed-room no security against the invasion of your taunts ? "

" Dr. Glossop, I would not allow you to retire to rest—I could not allow myself to retire to rest—without humbly asking your forgiveness for a most unwarrantable insult. It requires no defence, for it can have none."

" Not another word, my dear sir ; perhaps my reply was as caustic as your attack ? "

Had Mr. Clutterbuck *allowed* this, all had been well ; for the Doctor could never let go an opportunity of bepraising himself. But Mr. Clutterbuck

instantly subjoined, wanting to throw the deeper blame upon himself,—“Not at all, my good sir; I merited the severest punishment.”

“Then you *have* it, sir; and there is an end of it. Come, *retournons à nos moutons!*”—and down went the Doctor in the *very trim* above described, amidst the drawing-room revellers, to the infinite amusement, as well as astonishment, of the whole circle. Mr. Clutterbuck was so gratified at the proposition, that he never once threw his eyes upwards to see the exact condition of Dr. Glossop’s vestments. Tyndale had nearly burst a blood-vessel by laughing. The ladies shrieked, while the servants ran about in all directions, asserting that Dr. Glossop had been walking in his sleep. Reginald Cranmer could not resist the opportunity of making a slight or rapid pencil sketch of this formidable champion of the old Oxford school of divinity. What was rather ridiculous, the great *Phlosboterotontodon* champion could scarcely persuade himself of its impropriety; but then the Squire’s hock and sherry had had much to do in this matter.

CHAPTER VIII.

DR. GLOSSOP IN THE PULPIT — THE CHURCH OF
ENGLAND — THE UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD.

WHATEVER might be the excited state of Dr. Glossop's feelings, in consequence of the *double* attack made upon him in the course of the Saturday's symposium, it may be safely affirmed that before the dawn of the Sabbath not one particle of human irritability lingered in his bosom. His warmth cooled as it came—suddenly; and therefore when, at the express entreaty both of the Vicar and the Squire, he was to mount the pulpit of the village church, whither the reader has been so frequently conducted, it was quite certain that he would execute the task assigned to him with the freedom of an independent spirit, and the sincerity of an orthodox son of the church. His style of preaching was his own. A loud voice, a slouching manner, occasional hesitation, and even stopping—for no persuasion of man, woman, or child, could induce him to wear spectacles. The text was sin-

gular—from Psalm cxxviii., 2d verse: “*O well is thee, and happy shalt thou be.*”

It was no sooner delivered, than every one's countenance was characterized by a smile more or less evident. In fact, as not fewer than *two* marriages were upon the tapis, and as every one seemed to recollect that very verse, so *recently* pronounced by Scrimes at the marriage of Charles Ponton and Marianne Cranmer (and which, to be heard in perfection, should be heard from the lips of Mr. Joseph Langdon, clerk of St. Mary's, Bryanston Square), Doctor Glossop, it must be confessed, handled the subject both ingeniously and masterly. He applied his text, first, in its aggregate sense, to the country in which we were living; and, secondly, in its individual sense, to every one of the hearers present. He seemed to infer, that almost every human being, nurtured in the principles of Christianity, had good reason to thank his Maker for some particular cause or other of undoubted comfort or well-doing; that it should be our occasional duty to dwell upon life's *sunny* spots—remembering that how many, in the magnificent language of Johnson, were “surrounded by darker desperation than ourselves:”—that all life, the course even of the most apparently prosperous, was a state of trial; and that the great end of human existence was not only a selection of the more endurable

portions of that life, but a thankfulness that the burden was not *greater* than it actually *was*.

“Men,” observed the Doctor, “are too frequently the makers of their own miseries; their hearts reproaching them for the *omission* of much which they ought to have *done*, and for the *doing* of much which they ought *not* to have done. Our admirable Liturgy, in its general confession, had put this avowal very strongly into the mouth of each penitent: but then, we call upon our Maker to “restore them which are penitent”—and it is this penitence—this prostration of spirit and soul—from which the good man rises, and contemplates both the physical and moral world with feelings so as to make him ‘well’ and ‘happy.’ This *sanity* and *felicity* of feeling were the tests that a human being had not lived indifferently to every good and honourable purpose. It was the very charm of existence—it lighted up every dark place, and made the heart cheerful—it raised the spirit God-ward, and furnished the resolute and well-disposed with weapons wrought in the very armoury of gospel-salvation. There was nothing like the power and sweetness of feeling of CHRISTIAN CHEERFULNESS; and he was happy to be surrounded, on *this* occasion, by THOSE who had long lived under its benign and soothing influence.”

Mrs. Thorpe—having, of course, *texted* the preacher—roundly declared that she had never heard so much *learning* and *grandeur of speech* before; but Mrs. Thimbleton differed somewhat, and said, “the sermon was not, to her fancy, quite so close to the point as it might have been.” Mrs. Tucker, the village-schoolmistress, who, the reader may remember, had a vocabulary of her own, opined that, “some how or other, the joints of the discourse did not fit quite so closely and cleverly as they might have done. It wanted a *snuggery* about it—such as the sermons of the Vicar and the Curate always possessed.” Mrs. Partridge broke out into unqualified commendation of what she had heard. “She was sure the preacher must be the *Chancellor* of the University to which he belonged!” The whole congregation was more or less excited by the argument or eloquence which they had heard; and no small group was collected at the church-porch to salute Dr. Glossop as he retired. Our preacher was necessarily much gratified by such general demonstrations of admiration and respect.

The Vicar had strongly pressed Squire Ponton to bring his learned guest to the vicarage on the Tuesday, where he would meet the same party as before, and where it was probable that the Rev. Mr. Twysden would be paying him a short visit

on his way to Scotland. Major Dacre had fixed the same day ; “ but,” said he, with the tact which always marked his conduct, “ I yield to the church ; on this condition only, that we re-unite our forces on the ensuing Thursday, giving cool respiration between two such hot acts.” And it was settled that they should meet on the ensuing Thursday at Dacre Hall.

At the termination of the vicarial garden there is a mount, on the summit of which has long grown an overshadowing oak — deeply rooted — with a breadth and strength of foliage, which should seem to become more luxuriant every year. As the day of the *vicarial symposium* was uncommonly hot, it was proposed that the gentlemen, after dinner, should all retire beneath the shade of the old oak, where a long table, covered with fruit and wine, made a most tempting appearance. Never was there a spot where the “ *ingenti ramorum protegat umbrá*” might be said to be more completely realized ; and never was there a group which, when preparing for action, exhibited more tempting materials for the pencil of a Zoffani—did such a pencil now exist ! The joyous, similar, picture at Raith seemed to be here realized or renewed. At first, such was the congeniality of feeling among them all, that no one thought of doing any thing but eat grapes and drink Steinberg—an injudicious amalgamation.

It was too hot for talking, and what were they to talk about?

"I expect our worthy Bishop down soon," said the Vicar, "for our triennial confirmation; and he leads me to hope that he will make the vicarage his place of residence."

"Not so," replied Major Dacre; "for Dacre Hall has been, from time immemorial, the *habitat* of bishops on such an occasion."

"I had hoped the *Abbey* would have better suited the character of such a visitor, replied Reginald Cranmer. "He shall have the CRANMER ROOM, and I trust that neither his *right* nor his left hand will feel particularly *hot* during the night?"

"At any rate," replied the newly-arrived visitor, the Rev. Mr. Twysden, "you seem to make much of your BISHOP in these parts."

"And justly, sir," said Mr. Comberbach; "for he is a man of equal simplicity of manners and kindness of heart; and his long knowledge of the world has taught him to dispossess himself of every extraneous adjunct which may alarm or displease. Young Ruffham's ordination is the proof alike of his excellent sense and sweet Christian bearing."

"I would go down upon my knees in the mire," said the father of Ruffham, "to worship such a man as he passed."

“Then, sir, you would be guilty of a most abominable act of papistical worship. God only requires the knee,”—roared forth Dr. Glossop.

“My dear Doctor,” said the Squire; “did I not see you go do down upon your knees before our young Queen, when you was introduced to her?”

“No, Squire Ponton, you did not. I sunk upon *one knee* only; and she richly merited that mark of my respect.”

“Ah, sir,” said Mr. Clutterbuck, “I see you are looking towards the long-expected vacant see of Peterborough?”

“Upon my word, sir, no. It is an honour that I dream not of. I am getting too rusty for a bishop.”

“Indeed,” remarked Mr. Thomson, the curate, “if all bishops are *worked* as is the Bishop of * *, defend me from assuming the dignity of the office!”

“In other words,” slyly remarked Dr. Glossop, “the grapes are sour!”

Mr. Twysden could not help observing, that, “for *his* part, he never could see why bishops should not have retiring pensions, when age or infirmities assailed them. It is so with the judges; and the Bishop here alluded to has been long notoriously in the most decrepid state of health.”

“Where are the pensions to come from?”—said our *Phlosboterotontodon* opponent.

“Not from *your* pocket or *mine*, certainly,” rejoined Mr. Twysden; “but I presume, if you, Dr. Glossop, were appointed to the bishopric in question,”—here the Doctor enlarged his dimensions somewhat—“you would not object to give the invalided and retiring bishop *one-half* of the yearly revenue of the see?”

“I would give it with all my heart,” shouted the Oxford champion of divinity—already fancying he felt the slight weight of the mitre upon his head.

“And yet,” said Major Dacre, “why should this be? *Judges* have retiring pensions, and why not *bishops*? What utter folly, or rather fatuity, it is, to see the high and essential office of bishop filled by one who is unable to go his round of visitations; but who, enfeebled or bed-ridden at home, necessarily becomes a passive instrument (there have been cases where bishops in such situations have become lute tools) in the hands of others. His secretary, his agent, holds the secret strings.”

“You may add, wife and children,”—observed the Magistrate, in a *sotto voce*.

“I wish to tread lightly upon the ground of human infirmity in these cases, which are utterly indefensible, I admit, and which are very rare exceptions to the general rule;” rejoined the Major. “Thus much, however, I may add, that if I were a member of the Upper or Lower House, I would

move that all bishops receive letters free of the expense of postage. This seems to me but an act of sheer justice. I have heard of a Bishop of Chester receiving *seventy-five* letters by one post. Now, this is monstrous : first, because no episcopalian revenue can *stand* such a cost ; and, secondly, because two-thirds of the letters in question might have contained matters exclusively interesting to their *writers*, who never think of paying the postage of their letters. Add, moreover, how rarely a revenue of four thousand five hundred pounds per annum can meet collateral expenses of the same inevitable nature."

" I have heard our Bishop say," observed Mr. Thomson, " that he has scarcely time to read his own family letters—surrounded by such public calls upon his time and attention. The bishoprics of England are rather too few than too many."

" Why, sir," remarked Dr. Glossop, " only think what is to be done among public charities ; and then this National Commission—Metropolitan or otherwise—for the Building of Churches. Not only are the meetings expected to be graced by the *presence* of the bishops, but to be benefitted by their *purses*. When, and where, and how, it is to stop, Heaven knows !"

" As to the two great Societies for the Propagation of the Gospel in Foreign Parts, and the Pro-

motion of Christian Knowledge, I am free, and perhaps bold to say, that my sentence is *exclusively* for the *latter*,"—said Mr. Twysden.

"Sir," exclaimed Dr. Glossop, "this is the avowal of something little short of heresy."

"Not exactly so, Dr. Glossop," said the Vicar; "or, if it be, behold another heretic in myself."

"Had I known this, sir, I had not mounted your pulpit,"—grandiloquently observed the *Phlosboterontodon* opponent.

"I fairly own myself to be an anti-propagator of the Gospel in foreign parts," said the Magistrate, "and therefore I must vote with Mr. Twysden."

"Why, sir," said the Vicar, "see how the matter rests. The society no doubt is both excellent and ancient; founded upon the purest motives, but not, I think, upon the wisest principles. It takes the lead of all others on the score of antiquity; but it is the most liable, if not to abuse, to frequent perversion, and consequent failure. It is the *executive part* of it to which I strongly object, and yet I know not how to remedy it."

"Remedy it by a reconstruction of the society. It is the *Spiritual Quixotism* of the age. God will propagate his blessed Gospel, as to Him seemeth most wise and fit; but there are those who may think it conceit and impertinence to take upon ourselves the course or the plan of its propagation".

—gravely asserted Major Dacre, to the infinite astonishment of the whole party.

“I was not prepared for such an unqualified remark,” said the Magistrate;—“but as such a sentiment has been broached, I will second it by saying, SUPPORT the Gospel AT HOME, before you cast about to propagate it abroad. If the monies devoted to that *propagation* had been expended *here*, we might have seen the circle of clerical poverty much diminished, and the duties of the CHURCH OF ENGLAND more effectually performed. It is a wild, and in many instances a fanatical attempt, to carry the versions of Scripture into the remote regions of ignorance and barbarity. You will have a *De Propagandâ* cohort of emissaries, very shortly, in the most remotely spread regions. There will be Protestantism and Papacy contending for the mastery; while the native—

“Who thinks, admitted to an equal sky,
His faithful dog will bear him company?”

looks on with amazement, and sometimes trembles for the result. Let us not affect miracles which belong to the Great Disposer of things and events.”

“Then again,” observed Reginald Cranmer, to whom this subject had been often matter of anxious consideration, “you have, or will have, a host of heated *Missionaries*, who are resolved never to know rest or happiness but in slinging their Bibles to

you lose sight of common sense and common reason in your plans—if you are resolved to act without attending, as I observed upon a former occasion, to the *rationale* of the thing—you necessarily open the door for the entrance of the wildest irregularities. Now, the OTHER Society of which we speak, by confining its *object*, enlarges its *utility*. brings the rich man and the poor man in direct contact with each other. It sheds its blessings, at home and around you, wherever you go. It is intelligible, and as beneficial as intelligible. It may not occupy so vast a space as the Propagation Society ; but the seed which is scattered strikes deep, and is productive of three score and a hundred fold. God grant it an imperishable existence !”

“ I think,” said Mr. Comberbach, who till hitherto had kept silence, “ that whatever be the defects, (and defects all human institutions undoubtedly possess,) of these two great societies, they are both undoubtedly strong evidences of a RELIGIOUS PRINCIPLE, in this country, which may challenge competition throughout the globe. These societies, I say, proudly distinguish the extraordinary country which gave them birth and maturity. I think my friend, the Major, has been a little too warmly excited upon the first of these societies, when he designates it as an exemplification of spiritual Quixotism ; and that Mr. Twysden

has lent too ready a hand in deprecating, or in questioning, the extent of the good resulting from it. To calculate upon its reconstruction, is to entertain a very wild notion indeed. Without subscribing to the opinions of those who seem to indulge in the most unbounded views of its eventual establishment among all the barbarous hordes of the East, I can yet augur highly of its stability and worth among regions less remote, and with a population less subjected to the most revolting superstitions. It is quite wonderful, and, as it should seem, heaven-directed, that a country like this, should have given birth, growth, and strength, to so extraordinary a society. I purposely refrain from mentioning the names of individuals, more or less active, by their talents, in the study, or under the open heavens, who have been eminently conducive to its success—names, which would do honour to Europe in its brightest times, and will live to the latest posterity.”

On collecting the suffrages of the meeting, there did not appear to be much opposition to the positions laid down by Mr. Comberbach.

“But tell us, my good Dr. Glossop,” continued Mr. Comberbach, “how matters are going on at the UNIVERSITY OF OXFORD, in the library or book way? When are we to be made acquainted with the treasures of your *Bodleian Library*? Am

I right in asserting that a *century* has elapsed since the publication of the last catalogue? and that, within that century, your collection has increased *one-third*?"

"You are right in the first position, but wrong, I think, in the second: although I am happy to tell you that a *New General Catalogue* is far advanced in the printing: indeed, more than half of it is already executed—three volumes going on at the same time, under three distinct editors."

"Bravo! bravo!" shouted Tyndale; "and what of the separate collections of *Clarke, D'Orville, Malone, and Douce*?"

"They have been all separately catalogued," said Dr. Glossop; "and the latter is at length executed. Whether these treasures are notified in the general catalogue, as far as the opportunity has allowed, I cannot pretend to say; but possess your gallant soul in patience, my young gentleman. And as they tell me you are a bit of a *Bibliomaniac*, without subscribing to all the ridiculous caprices of a certain work under a certain title, you will have a vast, as well as new, region opened, where your ardent zeal may slake its fainting thirst to repletion."

"I understand," remarked Major Dacre, "that the Bibliomania is utterly extinct in London?"

"Why, sir, not exactly,"—replied Mr. Comber-

bach ; “but the passion is sinking lower and lower in the socket. Of all nations, the English are among the most capricious ; and they would do well to attend to a wood-cut representation of their fickleness, in a work published three hundred years ago. The drapery of the understanding seems to vary as much as that of the body. Give me the imperturbable attachment of the Dutch to tulips, and to Gerard Dows.”

“But we lose sight of Oxford,” remarked the Vicar, who was anxious to gain intelligence about every thing connected with his own University, which he worshipped in the core of his heart, and which he had not visited for the last fifteen years. “Do they lend out books, *now*, as they do at the University of Cambridge?”

“They do *not*, and I trust never *will*,”—rejoined Dr. Glossop.

“Wherefore?” remarked the Curate ; “are they more disposed to *abduction* in one University than another ? The plan, if a bad one, should be abandoned in *both* Universities : if a good one, the sooner it takes place at Oxford the better. At Cambridge, to which University I have the honour to belong, you may have ten books at one loan. It is certainly extraordinary that two such very opposite regulations should prevail. But say, have the under-graduates now permission to read in the

Bodleian Library? The very place should inspire meditation and studious abstraction. There is no such interior, to my knowledge, in the world."

"Under-graduates," replied the Doctor, "have no right of admission; but if disposed to be studious, they can easily get a letter of recommendation, and are never *refused*."

"Oxford for ever!" exclaimed Tyndale.

"Cambridge for ever!" shouted the Curate—and who should approach but his little family, headed by their mother, and all the ladies of the village in attendance? Reginald would necessarily spring forward towards Caroline—Tyndale for Jemima, with still greater alacrity—and Major Dacre put his most graceful movement into requisition, as he approached Mrs. Danvers. There was a good hour of daylight in the rear of the evening, and a general stroll ensued. Dr. Glossop's softened manner, towards the conclusion of the discussion, could not fail to be noticed and appreciated; and although there was less burst and excitement in consequence, there was evidently a more general satisfaction diffused. That learned divine claimed the honour of Mrs. Markham's arm, as the whole party sought the neighbouring meadow, to saunter on the banks of the Ex.

At a given distance, across the water, the rude notes of Tibbett's clarionet were heard, by way of

a rehearsal of the coming nuptial celebration ; and the paper, containing the presumed verses by the mole-catcher, was seen in the front of them. Time only would show the importance of the contents of that paper. On retiring within doors, the harp of Mrs. Markham touched by the skilful hand of Caroline Ponton, elicited the warmest applause: but the Major insisted upon his 'long whist' before the party broke up ; and it was a good deal beyond midnight before Dr. Glossop, the last to retire, renewed his acquaintancc with his night-cap.

CHAPTER IX.

LITERATURE AND THE FINE ARTS.

THE reader is necessarily prepared, from the commencement of the preceding chapter, for a symposium at Major Dacre's—the last upon record. Mr. Mansfield had quite recovered his indisposition, and had taken notes of all that was worth being notified in the gallery at Dacre Hall. Mr. Comberbach had paid frequent visits to the Major, and seemed to like him more and more on every visit. He was also particularly pleased with Mr. Ruffham ; but the real and strong object of his masculine admiration, was Squire Ponton. His fulness of heart, his flow of good humour, his mirth, his jollity, his liberality of disposition, seemed to know no bounds ; and then, if he dare intrude a step in such almost hallowed precincts, his admiration of his daughter Caroline ! who had now resumed all her good looks and fine figure—and whose understanding seemed to him to be of the purest and finest calibre. That his pupil was about to be made

happy by the hand of such a delightful lady, was matter of the sincerest gratification to him ; and in their walks together, they would anticipate much of the happiness of which such an alliance seemed to be the reasonable foundation.

It might, however, be doubted whether, at this precise moment, Caroline Ponton was altogether in a state of mind the most favourable for external impressions. The day of her union was approaching fast ; and she seemed to increase in something like nervousness as it approached : yet, what had she to anticipate of a painful description ? Great events are necessarily preceded by great anxieties—and there were hours, and even days, when she would sit alone, and apart even from the visits of Reginald. Something like a preternatural or almost superstitious dread would seem for awhile to possess her ; and she used often to leave the sofa, in tears, for her bed. At length, Reginald got intelligence of this, from her anxious mother. The father wished it to be kept back, but the mother would not hear of it. It was in one of these black melancholic temperaments, that Reginald one day surprised her ; and he was resolved to probe the wound on the first experiment.

“ Does Caroline repent her choice ? ” The words were as thunder to her ears.

“ Of *whom*, my adored friend ? ” said she.

“*Friend!*” echoed her lover. “Your vision is indistinct. I am Reginald Cranmer—your” He paused awhile.

“Finish your sentence, my Reginald—and say HUSBAND.”

“Then why so cold and hesitating?”

“It is my worse part against my better. I am overwhelmed, I cannot tell how: and yet I wish our wedding-day were to-morrow.”

“It shall be so, if you please. Here is THE LICENCE.” And he shewed her the licence. She started, and even gazed wildly as she took it up.

“The seal of my worldly happiness, I would hope!”—and she pressed it to her lips.

“This is as it should be!” exclaimed the enraptured Reginald; “and thou art a woman again!” He embraced her tenderly.

But the mysterious line, or boundary, had been passed; and now, Caroline Ponton assumed a different character. She was blithe, and bounding as the doe. She threaded one street after another, returning all the villagers’ salutations; having a long gossip with Mrs. Partridge, and frequently slipping open the orchard gate of Mrs. Thimbleton, “to see how the golden pippins were getting on.” Reginald was usually her companion; and they were as usually way-laid by the principal inhabitants. Nor was it a very uncommon occurrence

for Nicholas Tyndale to be in the rear of them. In fact, this was precisely the sort of *fun* which that capricious, but talented, young man, delighted in: and one of his principal objects was the soothing of the irritabilities, and calming the apprehensions of the widow Sparks, who lived in daily dread of the union of her faithless lover—the consumer of Jerusalem artichokes, and the expounder of “primitive Christianity”—with the rival widow Smithers. An occasion, however, presented itself (to be noticed in due order) to disarm her of all apprehensions on this score.

Major Dacre had taken uncommon pains to make his symposium on the Thursday as abundant and choice, as it should be well regulated throughout. It would, in all probability, be his last *bachelor-dinner*; and to exclude the ladies, would be contrary alike to good breeding and his fixed principles of hospitality. On the evening before, he was walking on the upper terrace of his flower garden with his guest, Mr. Marsfield, as the sun was sinking low in the heavens—

“I remember,” said he to his guest and friend, “it was something like such an evening as the present when I returned from my continental trip to secure the property of my nephew at Stuttgard. There was more of an autumnal glow in the hea-

vens—but see, my good friend, how magnificently the orb of day is retiring to rest !”

“ A very Claude Lorraine—or rather Both !” observed Mr. Marsfield. “ You could not introduce such vivid colours upon canvas. Mr. Turner may—but neither Claude, nor Both, nor Berghem, nor Vernet, ever thought of it ; and Sir Anthony Calcott would as soon think of painting a hedgehog across the sun’s disk, as even ATTEMPTING the matter.”

“ He is a sweet artist,” said the Major. “ I hope I shall yet get him down to Dacre Hall, and furnish us with a landscape in which the building of my ancestors may be immortalized by his unerring pencil ! But I think him too *grey* at times.”

“ He is a low-toned painter in general ; and is therefore very opposite to his great salamander rival, who seems to frisk and sport about on the fiery furnace which his pencil kindles. See there ! Down goes the sun—and mark the varying tints ! Hark ! I heard the sound of an horn !”

“ It is that of an old ivory horn, hanging up in my hall, which Thorpe, my butler, has taken to a neighbouring knoll—announcing, by its note, the approach of a strange carriage. Let us hasten to see whose it is.”

They hastened in advance, and saw four horses

drawing a dark blue carriage, with a mitre painted on the door of the carriage. It stopped as Major Dacre advanced. The inmate was quickly recognized as the very good Bishop who had ordained Mr. Ruffham; and his lordship observed,

“See, Mr. Dacre, how literally I adopt *your* mode of visiting, by not giving a previous announcement.”

“Your lordship is welcome—heartily welcome to the old battlements and pinnacles of Dacre Hall: and I rejoice at the visit at *such* an hour, because it gives me the assurance of your staying the next day. Luckily, it is a day that will in many respects be pleasing to your lordship; for ——”

“Pardon me, my dear sir, but if there be only Major Dacre and his friend (Mr. Marsfield bowed), I want no additional inducement to prolong my stay;” and he drove up to the door.

The mysterious horn sounded again. Another strange carriage was in view: and a *foreign* one. What might that imply? The arrival of the elder partner from the house of Messrs. Blinktofft at Stuttgard, who had been in London five weeks, and wished to see a little of the north of England before he returned. Besides, he had an additional thousand pounds—just transmitted to him, as the residue upon Reginald Cranmer’s claims; and he was resolved, in person, to be the bearer of the

good news. The Major hailed him with sincere joy : sent for Reginald, and told the foreigner that “ he would pound him at least for a week in the Hall.”

“ That is impossible, my good sir, for I must leave you at sunrise to-morrow.”

“ How ! at sunrise ?”

“ Even so : but let me see Mr. Cranmer.”

Half the house was sent scampering after Reginald, but the Major duly attended the Bishop within doors. “ His lordship had had a long and fatiguing journey, and would be glad to retire to rest as soon as possible,” said his valet : but Major Dacre would not hear of it. How to mix up the foreigner with the Bishop was rather a difficult matter ; but the departure of the latter for bed was considered to be a *sine quâ non*. He was attended to his room by the gallant host ; who first, however, got a servant, with a lamp, to shew him the *Genealogical Tree*, in all its glory :

“ Would his lordship take a peep at the Gallery ?”

“ To-morrow, to-morrow, good Thomas ; for I have no eyes to see out of to-night.” And his lordship retired to rest.

Reginald Cranmer was quickly at Dacre Hall ; and to his inexpressible joy received both the elder Blinktofft and the thousand pound bank-post bill which he brought with him from London.

“ But, Mr. Blinktofft,” said he, “ are you thoroughly satisfied with the payment for your unceasing trouble and attention to me and my affairs when I was at Stuttgard ? If not, take fifty pounds out of the thousand.”

“ I am in all respects, and so are my partners, abundantly satisfied with your remunerating spirit,” said the banker ; “ and this little supply comes opportunely to help to gild the happiness of your approaching nuptials ; for the Major has already made me acquainted with that circumstance.”

“ My happiness stands not in need of such gingerbread gilding as pounds, shillings, and pence, good Mr. Blinktofft. But you must see my Caroline : come and breakfast at Hasleby Park to-morrow morning.”

“ The breakfast must be at *five* in the morning then. You know we Germans are early risers ; and I must be on the road to Liverpool at six.”

“ It is impossible. But if you could only *see* her.”

“ You forget that I have *already* seen her.” The cheek of Reginald Cranmer here betrayed a slight suffusion, or hectic ; for our hero not only recollected the Lely miniature of the Lady Arabella, but that *that* miniature, for the temporary satisfaction of a gambling debt, had absolutely been pawned, or pledged.

“ Yes, yes, I remember,” said Reginald, “ you allude to the Lely miniature. But, my dear friend, what is art to nature ? ” A ring at the outer gate announced another arrival—and at this unseasonable hour ! It was Caroline Ponton herself—in company with Mrs. Cranmer ; each, according to her peculiar feelings, coming to thank the generous banker for the care and attention to Reginald when at Stuttgart. There is nothing like female *gratitude*, as well as affection. A man moulds his feelings into set phrases. A woman’s feelings overleap precision of language. Her heart is her storehouse, whence she draws her most powerful vocabulary. Mr. Blinktofft was all amazement on the entrance of these two ladies ; more especially when Mrs. Cranmer approached him, with both hands extended, and—said nothing : her tears being in readiness to course each other down her cheeks. She retreated—and sat down. Then Caroline advanced,

“ Oh, sir ! how can I sufficiently ”—

“ In the name of all that is good and generous,” said the unconscious banker, “ what have I *done* ? ”

Mrs. Cranmer then recovered her speech. “ You have done every thing to merit our everlasting gratitude.”

Still the banker could not, or would not, comprehend what it was all about.

Reginald distinctly explained. The German placed his hand upon his breast, and made a low bow to each lady.

“Tell me,” said Reginald to him apart, “what think you?”

“I more than think—I *feel*—she *was* one very Goddess! You shall fly to both the Poles, and not match her. Mr. Cranmer, you are *von* lucky fellow.”

“Right, right, my friend,” said the enraptured Reginald, “there is not such *another*!”

The ladies stayed about an hour; but, wonderful to say, wanted Reginald *out* of the room: that they might elicit some particular testimony from him, as to Reginald’s bearing while at Stuttgart. The Major understood the feeling, and drew his nephew insensibly out of the room, under the pretence of ten minutes’ conversation together about the marriage settlement.

Then, Caroline Ponton first broke silence.—“Mr. Blinktofft, did my beloved husband (who is shortly to be) conduct himself in all respects as became an Englishman, and a lover?”

“Madam, the question is a very sweeping one. I can only answer it by saying, that, as respects *myself*, nothing could exceed his liberality and kindness. He won *all* hearts—but *that* you could dispense with, perhaps?”—added the banker slyly.

“Far from it,” replied Caroline, “but go on.”

“Why, madam, I know not what I am to go on about. The King fêted him—and, as you know, proposed *yourself*, as a toast, before a large circle ——”

The banker stopped—looking at the lady, who would necessarily be “all abashed.”

“Never mind me, sir, go on ;” continued Caroline.

“Well, madam, the *Chargé d’Affaires* fêted him ; and last, though least, your humble servant thrice fêted him. He is a nice man : a good fellow ; —but you should have been with him at the storming of Fürstenhoff Castle !”

“Alack, sir !—I should have been anywhere *but* with him on such an occasion ; and yet ——”

“Caroline, my dear,” said Mrs. Cranmer, “you are somewhat wandering.”

“In a word, madam,” resumed the banker, “there was scarcely a respectable family in our city but what loved as well as admired him ; and, especially, a fair lady with whom he had waltzed at Baden-Baden ——”

“Indeed, sir !” said Caroline, rising, and advancing towards the banker, “I never heard this before !”

“Oh ! yes, ma’am—and if you had seen him showing *your miniature* to her, and saying, it was

contemptible compared with the *original*—in fact, the lady bore some slight resemblance to *yourself*, —only——”

“Only what?”

“Not quite so beautiful, madam”—replied the banker, bowing, and plunging his fore-finger and thumb into his snuff-box.

At this moment Reginald reappeared.

“We have cut you up prettily in your absence,” said the mother.

But Caroline had been altogether so affected as to leave the room; and seemed to chide herself for even the shadow of an indulgence of what might be derogatory to the character of her lover. And on Reginald’s pursuing her, she declared that
“SHE WAS UNWORTHY OF HIM.”

This, however, was the ebullition of the moment. “Do what you will, or say what you will!” exclaimed her generous lover, “you shan’t ESCAPE BEING MY WIFE. And here comes an additional thousand pounds for your tea-pot and jewel-casket,” added he jocosely, and showing the thousand pound bank-post bill.

Caroline was overwhelmed with mixed joy and shame: and from that moment every struggle, every feeling, every thought, was in perfect accordance with the most humble submission, the most unqualified, the most ardent and devoted, attachment.

"Would that the wedding day were to-morrow !" said she to herself, as she sought her sleeping room.

By midnight, Dacre Hall was in perfect repose. Mrs. Cranmer, her son, and Caroline Ponton had departed. The banker was in sound sleep ; and the Bishop had been long ago in sweet slumber ; "*sopor altus habebat.*" Mr. Marsfield was dreaming of the Sistine Chapel. Mr. and Mrs. Thorpe were muttering in their sleep something in commendation of Dr. Glossop's discourse. The Major was alone and awake. He could not sleep ; or, had it been so, the occupier of Woodbine Lodge might have presented herself in a vision to his slumbers. He sought his library through the corridor. Although his step was light, the silence of midnight re-echoed every tread of the foot. He held up the bed-chamber candlestick to discern his way more correctly, and saw the flashes of light gleaming on each picture as he passed them. He had just reached the celebrated Lady Arabella portrait, when, to his horror and astonishment, the nails, to which it was suspended, gave way, and down fell the picture with a tremendous crash. The Major could scarcely contain himself. "Here is an OMEN, gracious Heaven !" said he ; and hurried to his bed-room ; but daylight had dawned ere he fell into his sleep—studiously resolving that no one should be disturbed by the accident.

The morning came. Every servant, on the occasion of such a symposium as that to take place, was stirring by six ; when Thorpe, as was his custom on set-occasions, applied the ivory horn to his lips, and blew the note for a general bestirring. It both alarmed and surprised the *Bishop* ; but his valet explained the circumstance—and on retiring, and losing his way, walked through the corridor—where the Lady Arabella lay prostrate. He halloed aloud. Thorpe rushed in—and stood aghast. “It was his blast which had caused the picture to fall. Nothing but misery was sure to follow. Heaven defend us!”

Mrs. Thorpe—the whole set of servants were quickly assembled.

“Could their master be sleeping at such a crisis?”

It was judged advisable to send for Frank Cotton, the carpenter, who, with stouter nails, could hang the picture more effectually ; and within the half hour the Lady Arabella resumed her position and her smiles. Thorpe urged every one to the strictest secrecy. “He would not have his master know it for the world.”

The banker had risen, and fled by five—slipping two Dutch gold ducats into the hands of the butler, who, on the departure of the owner, declared them to be “vile counterfeits of the current

coin." The Bishop was exceedingly gratified by everything within and without the Dacre demesnes, and was particularly anxious about the welfare of his young friend, Mr. Ruffham, whom he had recently ordained.

"You will see both father and son at dinner," remarked Major Dacre.

At two the carriage was ordered for a drive, and our Major performed the part of Cicerone to perfection. Mrs. Cranmer, with Reginald, came sometimes—in order to arrange matters in due form for the dinner; and to afford both an opportunity of a longer acquaintance with the Bishop. By six, the whole party was assembled. They need not be recapitulated; except that both the Ruffhams, and Mr. Marsfield—with the Bishop—would necessarily add to the number. It was upon the whole a sumptuous banquet, and upon the most liberal scale. It was impossible to say whether the ladies or the gentlemen were the merrier and happier; and a love of truth obliges me to confess that the two *Brides elect* never shone with greater splendour, both in dress and "behaviour." Mrs. Danvers seemed to challenge conversation; while the Major looked on surprised. Caroline Ponton, alternately with the Bishop and her better half, never said more sprightly things or exhibited better breeding; his lordship observing quietly to

the mother, that "she was a lady of a sweet presence, and well calculated to adorn every society." By sheer good luck, Reginald heard these "sweet" words, and challenged the speaker to a glass of the true *Steinberg*.

The barbarous custom in England of an early dismissal of the ladies necessarily contracted the circle, and diminished the sounds of social merriment. Dr. Glossop fired the first shot.

"Had his lordship seen the last number of the Quarterly?"

"No, sir, nor of the Edinburgh: though I take both: '*audi alteram partem*,' you know."

"Why, my lord, I do not see why *both* should be taken?"

"I do not see why truth and intelligence are rendered the less acceptable from a consideration of the *garb* in which they are conveyed—

'Tros Tyriusve mihi nullo discrimine agetur,'"

concluded his lordship, mildly and pleasantly.

"Trojan, or Carthaginian, I abhor the '*punica fides*'"—muttered the *Phlosboterontodon* opponent.

The magistrate was all over bristles. "Dr. Glossop, when a spiritual judge passes so just and so Christian-like a sentiment, I enter my protest against your commentary upon his lordship's text!"

“Sir, I made no commentary”—said the commentator.

Mr. Comberbach continued the discussion. “It has always struck me as a most wonderful thing how the *Machinery of Literature* continues to be kept on the full swing: and it is difficult to say, whether in the department of the belles-lettres or of theology, the publications are the more numerous.”

“Doubtless,” said his lordship, “they are numerous enough in our profession, and I regret to observe that such *adverse* publications are claiming the attention of the studious: by which I mean, publications embracing the very *opposite* sides of the question.”

“It is so in all things—and your lordship can scarcely calculate upon an exception in favour of *Theology*. Hence, in a quarterly publication exclusively devoted to the defence (or the injury?) of the Church of England, two modern prelates, notorious for their learning and piety, are singled out, and the public are asked whether either of these Bishops is to be called an ‘earthly likeness’ of their divine Master? Now, I should say, that if the Church of England stood in need of such ‘quarterly reviewing’ as this, it is sinking to a very low ebb indeed—

‘Non tali auxilio, non defensoribus istis
Tempus eget,’—

Surely 'the Quarterly Review,' strictly so called, would never go such lengths !"

The Bishop expressed his surprise, and the Major his incredulity ; but Mr. Comberbach reiterated the fact, and continued thus :—"What is infinitely surprising, if not wonderful, is, the multiplicity of *Periodical Publications*—to say nothing of newspapers : and every body, now-a-days, writes well, or fluently, or vigorously. Every body is wide awake. Even the *Gentlemen's Magazine*, breaking away from tombstones and barrows, is now sparkingly alive, and its leading articles evince the taste and the scholarship of no mean hand !"

"I love that publication exceedingly," said Mr. Clutterbuck. "There is no foolish chatter, or flimsy rigmarole about it. Its *Obituaries* are of first-rate calibre ; and I honour the memory of my dear old friend JOHNNY NICHOLS as I do that of a veteran, who, gathering in his full sheaves, and bearing them joyfully upon his shoulders, marches on to his final reward with the consciousness of one who has not laboured in vain."

"I look for my *Sylvanus Urban*," remarked the Bishop, "with the most unmitigated and unalloyed pleasure ; and few trim their lamps of a winter's evening for a steady perusal of the contents, more regularly and more earnestly than myself."

"There is no occasion to particularise further,"

observed Mr. Comberbach; "but I only venture to call the attention of your lordship, and that of the company, to the simple fact of the extraordinary number of *periodicals*. A friend of mine, a secretary to a book-club in the country, is sometimes three days cutting open the leaves of these monthly lucubrations; another friend has only time to read announcements of works, and establishments of societies—especially of the *insurance* kind; a third friend takes in two newspapers—each sometimes doubly charged with matter—and he has not waded through one set of debates, when another assails him, and upsets his patience. And yet, they beat us on this score in France."

"They are fond of lighter reading there," observed the Major.

"It may be so; but I suspect that, of English readers, two-thirds feed and fatten, if they can, upon thin milk porridge. The clubs of London consume an enormous proportion of these periodicals."

"Sir," observed Dr. Glossop, "life is too short to encounter folios and quartos. Your post-octavo for ever!"

"I suspect," rejoined the magistrate, "that you have got a work in hand, to be published by Mr. Colburn or Mr. Bentley? They are the great monopolisers of post-octavos. Confess the truth, most renowned Doctor."

The company here all smiled ; but the Doctor simply observed, " Time will shew."

" At any rate," added Mr. Comberbach, " if you should happen to be *enceinte* with an incipient work, prepare yourself for all the difficulties and anxieties of a *first birth*. One critic will write it *up* ! another will write it *down* !—and Dr. Glossop, so eminently distinguished at Oxford, may find himself floating about on the great ocean of literature, without compass to direct or star to illumine. And then think of the expense—the enormous expense—attending an effectual first announcement ! Hungry mouths naturally open widely, and you must fill them—to repletion. You understand me, I am sure, my dear Doctor ?"

" Too well—too well ; the child shall perish in *utero* !" —roared our *Phlosboterotontodon* champion.

Mr. Comberbach continued—" I know not how it may strike your lordship, but in the very general and wide diffusion of LITERATURE, it seems to me that the study of *archæology* is on the decline. We have never yet, and never shall, I fear, produce a *Mabillon* or a *Montfaucon*."

" Simply because, as I conceive," observed his lordship, " the government does not patronise that branch of study. But then you have the *Archæologia*."

" True ; but it is so miscellaneous, and in many

parts superficial, if not capricious :—simply because every man not only keeps his own view of a subject distinctly separate from another man's view, but because he will neither hear of nor endure opposition or controversy. Yet there are some capital papers in the *Archæologia*."

"Still," remarked the Vicar, "you have nothing equal to the *Literary History of France*, in a dozen quarto volumes, at the least : nor any thing approaching the *Monarchie Française* of Montfaucon."

"Think of his *Antiquités Expliquées*," exclaimed the Major, raising both hands, "of which I rejoice to say that my large paper copy was 'bound out of sheets,' as it is technically called. You must see it before you leave Dacre Hall, my lord."

"The defect of Montfaucon's works is the superficialness—if not great inaccuracy—of the *plates*. The Bayeux tapestry alone is a confirmation of this. Look at it in that truly national and interesting work, as published by our Society of Antiquities, from the rigidly faithful pencil of Stothard, and look at it in foreign publications. I could mention other proofs connected with Normandy alone?" observed the 'Man of Letters.'

Mr. Thomson remarked, that "it struck him, that the basis of a noble work upon the ENGLISH MONARCHY might be supplied by the publication

of our *castles*—now rapidly crumbling to decay ; or, if not, about to be battered to pieces by the projected routes of railways.”

“ You forget,” remarked his lordship, “ that you have King’s *Munimenta Antiqua*, in four folio volumes.”

“ King shall have my thanks,” remarked Mr. Comberbach, “ for having done a good deal that is curious and valuable ; but, as a complete work, or even of general merit, it is almost contemptible. The drawings are eminently unfaithful. Let the Antiquarian Society, aided by a royal donation, set its wits to work by the foundation of an ENGLISH MONARCHY ; but not of too vast and unwieldy dimensions.”

“ That is a matter of mere opinion or rather of taste,” remarked Nicholas Tyndale, from the bottom of the table. “ For *my* part, the English Monarchy can never be too *vast* and *unwieldy*. I should wish it to be in as many volumes as my extended arms could embrace.”

The remark produced considerable mirth ; but it was exactly characteristic of the speaker ; for Tyndale had openly avowed that, though he wished his father to live a thousand years—if it so pleased him—yet, the moment he got into possession of Coverdale Hall (the name of his property), the largest room in the house should be devoted to the

collection of *antiquities* and *antiquarian relics*; and that Stourhead should not eclipse Coverdale in due time. Thank Heaven!" added he, in the very joy of his heart, "I am likely to marry a woman who declares that she will never presume to introduce either brush or duster into my apartment!"

A general peal of laughter followed this enthusiastic burst, on the part of our young antiquarian.

"My lord," continued Mr. Comberbach, "it has struck me that we want another LELAND and another *Itinerary*; and, as before, a royal purse to back him. I would have all public libraries officially reviewed."

"And reported upon, I trust," added Dr. Glos-sop.

"To be sure, sir; and we will begin with your Bodleian; nor will we overlook Christ Church—both among the finest localities in the kingdom. You will get your ham sandwiches and college ale ready, and duly spread in the latter place, when the Head Book-Commissioner makes his visit at Oxford."

"Sir, I will give him better fare at my own rooms—roast-beef and port-wine. How is a man to do any thing worth doing, with ham and ale?—roared out our *Phlosboterontodon* friend.

"May I venture to ask Mr. Marsfield," said the Bishop, "if he have seen the pictures in this ancient mansion?"

"But, my good lord," exclaimed Reginald Cranmer, "you should come and see our portrait of Archbishop Cranmer!"

"It is not a genuine one, Mr. Cranmer; but it may be a copy, of some two hundred years standing," observed Mr. Marsfield. "I wish we had a gallery of the bishops of the time of the Reformation. There is a genuine portrait of Archbishop Wareham, the last of the Roman Catholic prelates, in the Louvre Gallery; but of Cranmer, and even of Parker, I think we are yet in want of well-authenticated portraits. Portrait painting seemed to be at a stand-still between Holbein and Zuchero: and yet I must not forget Sir Antonio More. Your lordship asks if I have seen and noticed the pictures in this house? If few, they are excellent in quality, and quite genuine. The portrait of Lady Arabella Dacre is one of the finest Vandykes in the kingdom: while for true masculine vigour, and power of touch, I know of few better portraits than the Cromwell, by Walker. The Sir Kenelm Digby, by Cornelius Jansen, is also very fine; but Jansen's portraits usually look like bodies without souls."

"Pray, Mr. Marsfield," quietly observed the Bishop, "what is the distinction, as to *look*, of a body or face, with or without a soul?"

"Your lordship has properly corrected an ex-

pression which may be a little enthusiastic, or even rhodomontade: but I mean, that his flesh is hard and cold. His sitters seem to have been all copiously bled before they took their sittings. On the contrary, look at the portraits by Velasquez or Reynolds: they are replete with vitality. Their eyes move and look you through and through."

"But suppose," said the Major, "the original has a dull, or heavy, or immoveable eye?"

"That shall not serve you, my friend," smartly rejoined the virtuoso; "the pencil of either of the two artists, just named, endows it with life and motion. Yet, talking of eyes, the portrait of Garrick, by Reynolds, who had the sharpest of all mortal eyes, has never yet appeared to me to be an eminently successful one. That of him between Tragedy and Comedy is perhaps the best."

"I am for a National Gallery of Portraits, to exhibit upon the walls what Lodge has exhibited upon paper; or rather, what the several artists employed on that truly national work, have produced upon copper," remarked Reginald Cranmer.

"Sir!" exclaimed Dr. Glossop, "you must, in such a case, build a room half a mile long."

"A whole mile, if you please, Doctor; and let's you and I walk in it before breakfast, to give us the proper impetus for the day"—replied Cranmer.

"Sir, I walk nowhere before breakfast, for all

the Velasquezes and Reynoldses in the world !” exclaimed the Oxford divine.

The servant here announced the preparations for the evening festivities.

“ You live in gallant trim here, my dear Major,” remarked the episcopal guest.

“ Why, my lord, you visit us at a crisis ! We are all going to be married, and should be all mirthful and happy.”

“ Is Major Dacre included in the list of approaching Benedicts ?” continued the Bishop.

“ He is, he is,—and your lordship shall be speedily convinced that he has good cause therefore to be happy.”

The whole party retired for the drawing-room and corridor. Dacre Hall, from the top to the bottom, seemed to be in a blaze of light. It was the last effort or display of bachelor hospitality. Something like the fancy-ball, as recorded in a preceding page,* took place, only the visitors were not habited in characters. Perhaps nearer fifty than forty were assembled : each and every one resolved to show their deep regard for the founder of the feast, and their delight in an approaching union which should tie him down by yet tighter cords to his *natale solum*.

* Vol. i. p. 271.

They were scarcely well mixed up together, when Major Dacre took his lordship by the hand and formally introduced him to Mrs. Danvers. The salutation was as graceful on the one side, as it was respectful on the other.

“When I have next the honour of paying my respects at Dacre Hall, my introduction to Mrs. Danvers will probably not be retarded to so *late* a portion of the day”—observed his lordship.

It was impossible to make any defence to so storming an attack. Confused and slightly trembling, Major Dacre led his intended to a settee. Mrs. Cranmer soon introduced herself and her daughter Julia, in spite of Sir Benjamin Burridge; who, wanting the courage to attack in front, hung upon the rear, and seemed anxious to obtain even the slightest glance of the scornful Julia. The hand of Caroline Ponton was quickly upon the harp; and that of Mrs. Danvers, as on a former occasion, upon the grand piano: they were resolved upon a country dance, though Tyndale certainly strove hard for the gallopade. All was mirth and gaiety; and both the Vicar and the Curate each found a partner; while his lordship, Major Dacre, with Mrs. Cranmer and Mrs. Ruffham, sat down to sober whist.

"Silver threepences, if you please, my lord?" said Mrs. Ruffham.

"Silver twopences, if you prefer them, ma'am," was the Bishop's reply. "I sit down only in conformity with Major Dacre's wishes."

The Major had better not have played; for his eye was constantly glancing off the cards, in observance of Mrs. Danvers' playing.

"Upon my word," remarked his lordship, "it is difficult to say which is the better performer—the pianist or the harpist." The Major quickly revoked; and the game, though at *Longs*, was as quickly lost.

"I think we have had enough," quietly remarked the Bishop, with a smiling expression of countenance: and they mingled with the company, sitting, standing, or dancing. The latter seemed to increase in spirit; the feet marked the time more distinctly; some few gave the Scotch smack of the middle finger and thumb, when Mrs. Cranmer rose to relieve Mrs. Danvers at the piano. As she advanced, a terrible crash was heard from the wainscot. The portrait of Lady Arabella gave way, and fell to the ground. A general shriek followed. Caroline Ponton with difficulty kept from fainting.

"Merciful Father! what an omen!" said she; striving to smother the tones of her voice, and to

concentrate all her feelings within herself. Reginald flew to replace the picture.

At the critical moment, Thorpe, the butler, entered; and was perfectly petrified with horror.

"Oh, Mr. Reginald, see what harm is in store for Miss Ponton!"

"You dolt—be silent!—why for Miss Ponton more than Miss Cranmer or me?" Mrs. Thorpe made her appearance.

"May the heavens drop—but 'tis wondrous strange! This is the second time that picture has fell prostrate on the floor! Guard us against evil!" The Bishop approached—

"My Lord Bishop—my Lord Bishop—lay the evil spirit. The house is haunted."

"Haunted indeed!" observed his lordship, "by as brave and merry a set of spirits as ever sprung upon an oaken floor. The better way to lay the evil spirit is, to get a couple of strong nails, and raise the portrait to its original place."

"I knew Mr. Cotton had done his work very slovenly, this morning," said Thorpe.

"What work?" enquired the Major.

"Why, sir, this picture fell down during the night, as I found it so when I got up, and I sent for Cotton to replace it." Of course no one knew the fact of the picture's falling better than the

Major, as he was present at the moment of the accident ; while the butler, unwittingly, considered his master ignorant of it.

But there was an end of the dancing ; and, in fact, an end of the gaiety. The spirits of Reginald began to catch their hue and tone from those of Caroline ; in whose breast, though firm as adamant, as well as white as marble, very unpleasant sensations were beginning to prevail. People sometimes *love* superstitious occurrences : they cling to them as if by choice. There is a marked and mystified feeling which invests them with even a sort of poetical colouring ; and yet, why our heroine, from the mere casual circumstance of a supposed resemblance to the fallen lady, should be affected in particular by that fall, was utterly incomprehensible. Reginald, however, took care to conceal from her the *second* fall. And yet, wherefore ? for if Frank Cotton had only applied stout instead of weak nails, the Lady Arabella had never quitted the wainscot a second time. Mr. Comberbach interposed—Dr. Glossop had got his “battering-ram” for the expulsion of all evil spirits ; and the Major had even prevailed upon Mrs. Danvers to come forward in a sort of jocular, or semi-sarcastical strain. Mr. Ruffham displayed admirable tact in bantering the old butler and his wife ; making them, in the end,

quit the room, as if haunted by the dreaded evil spirits.

“Talk and prate as they may,” said the chafed Mrs. Thorpe, “no good comes of this *double fall*.”

Caroline Ponton, under the express and earnest exhortation of Mrs. Cranmer and the Vicar, resumed the even tone of her spirits, and even declared that she was ready to play, if the company would resume the dance. But no effective rally could be made; and, somehow or other, the latter part of the evening, or rather of midnight, hung heavily on all hands. The Bishop had retired to rest a good hour, and all seemed well-disposed to seek their pillows; still, the untoward circumstance of the falling of the picture seemed to occupy the deep attention of more than *one* of the party. Reginald Cranmer tossed it over and over again in his mind, on seeking his bed-chamber; “but,” said he, “if superstition means any thing, it must be *consistent*. The *second* fall had virtually rendered the first of no effect. Caroline Ponton could not die *twice*. Then again, if this second accident involved his *own* destiny, it would have been the portrait of the *Lord Dacre*, whose dress he had copied at the fancy-ball—and not the Lady Arabella. Thus, upon its own basis, the superstition varnished ‘into

thin air.' And, besides, there was a superintending Providence above, to whose mighty and unerring power all human destinies were consigned. That power would issue its decrees as seemed best to infinite wisdom—decrees, which taught us to treat with contempt the breaking of a jar, or the falling of a picture, as the precursor of dissolution." Such were the embodied reflections of Reginald Cranmer, as, after his midnight orisons, he sunk to rest.

CHAPTER X.

ALL BUT —

MINGLED and exciting as were most of the events of the preceding day, the next morning's sun rose upon many cheerful countenances and gladdened hearts. The Bishop was stirring betimes, as he had a long day's journey before him; and he wished to pay an early morning visit at Thornborough Abbey. Major Dacre accompanied his guest thither; and after receiving his lordship most graciously, Mrs. Cranmer shewed him—such as they were—a few of the lions of the place. The portrait of Archbishop Cranmer was quickly visited; and the Bishop paid it due attention in every possible light in which it could be placed; but he was of Mr. Marsfield's opinion, that the portrait was not coeval with the original. Still it was highly singular. They next shewed his lordship the sacramental cup and paten, which Crane had lately discovered in the vestry-chest in the old chapel; and with these the Bishop was much gra-

tified. This induced a visit to the chapel itself; whither all the party retired.

Few of that party could recollect the interior of that chapel so well as the hero of our tale; and he made himself particularly useful and agreeable upon the occasion. They were first introduced to “the blood-stained surplice,” which Crane displayed with great formality and precision.

“Surely, Mr. Cranmer, you had better destroy this?” said the Bishop, calmly; “such relics of barbarous periods are as well done away with.”

The company assented to the remark; telling the Bishop, very truly, that it had not been long discovered: and they next visited the chancel and altar. The stained glass, on the south side, was particularly attractive to his lordship, for a portion of it was of the time of Henry VII. He then directed his attention to the altar; and seeing there two hassocks, asked Reginald Cranmer “how *that* came to pass?” But Julia released her brother from his extreme embarrassment, frankly and truly adding, that Mr. Tyndale and Miss Ponton had knelt there, in a jocose mood, as if enacting the parts of man and wife, on the day of the marriage of her sister with Mr. Charles Ponton.

“It was an odd whim,” the Bishop quietly remarked, “but I suppose the mock ceremony was confined to that couple?”

“By no means,” remarked Reginald, “there are others, I suspect, who have availed themselves of the use of these hassocks”—and the conversation dropt. His lordship paid a most minute attention to every part of the chancel, which, although kept in perfect repair, as to the exclusion of wind and rain, yet presented but a desolate appearance. Reginald placed himself on the north side of the altar, where he supposed the Protestant minister was slain; and stooping down to see what his foot struck, he pulled out a very curiously wrought cushion or hassock, which he supposed might have been used by Charles I. when he partook of the sacrament there—“C. R.” being worked in raised gold in the centre. It was carried within as a precious relic, and from thence conveyed to the family pew in the parish church. The dark blue cloth about the altar was just held together by a few shreds, to prevent its falling to tatters. By mid-day his lordship had turned his back upon “Sweet Auburn,” expressing himself in the highest terms of gratification at the treatment he had experienced, and reiterating “his best wishes to the young deacon.”

I know not how it happens, or did happen, but the village was all at once seized with a fit of *idleness*. Nobody would work—nobody could work. Why was it so? They could talk of nothing, and

think of nothing, but of the coming nuptials—of *both couples*; for it was now in vain to conceal the marriage of the Major.

“It is ALL BUT—” replied Mrs. Tucker, the schoolmistress, to the hundred questions put to her.

“ALL BUT—” said Mrs. Partridge; and when Roger Payne was asked if his muse were in readiness to start, he replied “ALL BUT—.”

Caroline Ponton strolled in Mrs. Thimbleton’s orchard, the golden pippins were ALL BUT ripe.

“If Mr. Cranmer could only allow *nine* instead of *three* days, the pippins would be QUITE ripe.”

“I will mention it,” replied the amiable visitor, “but I fear his plans have been too long, and too determinedly fixed, for waiting the period mentioned—and, besides, suppose the pippins should be of rather a *faint*, than a decidedly golden tint—what of that?”

“Only they would not have *quite* so fine a flavour,” replied the horticulturist; “but could you not, my lady, put in a word for the *nine* days!”

Caroline could not refrain from laughter—adding, “Why, Mrs. Thimbleton, it was I who fixed the day!”—whereupon the lady of the orchard sought her cottage in comparative sadness of spirit.

Mr. Fornham was now seen to be always walking with a hurried step.

“How soon will it be?” said the widow Sparks;

“for I want to prepare my suit of any thing but *sables*.”

“Look sharp—look sharp to your needle,” answered the lawyer, “we are ALL BUT ready.”

Mr. Randall arrived from London.

“That really had an *o-minus* look,” Scrimmes remarked; and when that gentleman was seen in rapid movement between Woodbine Lodge and Dacre Hall, there could be no question as to what was going on in those quarters. The drafts of both marriage settlements were now under the last revision of Mr. Randall, from Fornham, both having been submitted to the experienced eye of that distinguished conveyancer, Mr. Brodie, of Lincoln’s-Inn Fields, the elder brother of the yet more distinguished surgeon, Sir Benjamin Collins Brodie, Bart., Mr. Brodie had declared, that, considering the nature and the amount of the property to be settled, he had rarely received drafts so perspicuously and cautiously worded. This was a red feather for the bonnet of Fornham or of Mr. Randall:—or of both.

“Well, Mr. Randall,” said Thorpe, who began to affect a familiarity with the London solicitor, “how are we getting on?”

“ALL BUT ready, Mr. Thorpe; a very few days will settle it.”

“Sir, is any thing said in the deeds about *me*?”

“About *you*—why should there be?”

“I mean, as to my dress, appearance, and behaviour, on the day of nuptials?”

“Not a syllable: the deeds relate to the future, and not to the present. I dare say you may dress as you please.”

“I wish to know if there be any impediment or legal objection to my wearing *red trunk-hose* on that day?”

“Not a whit: not a whit:” replied Mr. Randall, who now sought the residence of Fornham.

Tibbetts, Bunn, and Briskett, were knotted together at the corner of Chronicle Field, on the high road to the church, and Mr. Randall was compelled to pass them.

“There! that is the man that has got the good things of this world under his arm,” said Tibbetts —“in other words, those papers contain lots of acres for one party, and lots of sovereigns for another. Good day, sir, we give you good day:” and they all took off their hats.

“What brings you all together here, my good friends?” observed the London solicitor.

“Why, sir, we can’t do a stitch of work, till these marriages are solemnized,” said Tibbetts, in a grave tone of voice.

“You may be idle then, and perhaps starve for several days.”

“Ah, sir, you don’t look as if you spoke the truth. People don’t *smile* when they consign others to *starvation*.”

“All depends upon the ripening of Mrs. Thimbleton’s golden pippins, I am given to understand.”

“Impossible! impossible!” and they all three rushed to that good woman’s orchard.

“Mrs. Thimbleton, Mrs. Thimbleton,” shouted Briskett, “your pippins look quite tempting. Don’t let them get too ripe.”

“Too ripe!” rejoined the horticulturist, “by rights they should hang another fortnight upon the boughs; but something must be done to expedite their maturity, within *three* days.”

“Why three days?”

“Because—ha! how nicely you affect ignorance!”

“We are as ignorant as hounds.”

“Then be as wise as serpents. Miss Ponton, who has just quitted me, tells me, that only three days are to intervene between this and the bridal day.”

“In fact, then,” they all shouted, “it is ALL BUT—” and away they went, with the intention of meeting again at the Queen’s Head that evening, to settle the preliminaries of the Village Festivities, on the day of the *double marriage*.

The cart of Frank and Phoebe Cotton was now

seen to be rapidly moving about the village, with little Ann Erith (the innocent cause of a late fright) frequently sitting between them. It stopped at the Queen's Head. Cotton lent a willing ear to the plans of the confederates, and Phoebe hastened home to take pains in earnest about the completion of the wedding garland. Every body seemed to feel in duty bound to do nothing, but think, and talk, and plan, about the coming nuptials. Middle-ditch would sit himself down under a hawthorn tree, and run the whole gamut of baritone notes, stopping at "double D." The lasses of the village all fell to singing, as they strolled or stood still.—

“Come haste to the wedding,”

was the pretty air chaunted by Susan Sucker.

“Now all in preparation
For the nuptial celebration,”

was the once celebrated song, excellently well sung by Frank Cotton, while his wife trilled the air, as she intertwined the flowers of the wedding garland,—

“Come let us dance and sing,
While St. Martin's bells do ring.”

In fact, the whole village wore the air of perfect good-humour and general contentment. At length, the grandees threaded the two streets of the village, *propriis personibus*; the Major leading with the

Woodbine widow. Reginald Cranmer with Caroline followed "hard upon,"—and all the other Pontons and Cranmers, together with Messrs. Clutterbuck, Comberbach, Marsfield and Ruffham, as humour or inclination led. It was the last appearances of some of them in their *single* characters. Every body was at their door as they marched along; but as they gossipped with one, tarried with another, or sat down with a third, no precise order was observed.

The Major entered the "Jolly Butchers."

"How do you get on, Mrs. Smithers?"

"Alack! sir, but sadly."

"And when are you and yours to join *us* and *ours*?"

"Heaven only knows, sir: for I do not."

"Why, it's a settled thing, isn't it?"

"Nothing is settled in this world," said the down-spirited widow; turning round towards her pocket, and fumbling for her handkerchief.

"Well, you will dress dinner for two or three dozens, in a day or two."

"What is to happen, sir?"

"Only a little bit of a wedding at the Abbey."

"They *do* say, sir, that there will be *another* wedding."

"Carry my orders into effect, Mrs. Smithers, and I will stand to the cost."

Mrs. Danvers was, in the mean time, busily occupied with Mrs. Partridge.

“So, madam!” said that renowned personage, “I understand it is ALL BUT—”

“Pray explain more particularly,” replied the happy widow,—affecting a gravity which was the farthest from her heart.

“Oh, dear madam! they do say that you are also going to be made a happy lady, for the second time.”

The latter part of this sentence might have been spared, as it seemed seriously to affect the individual to whom it was addressed; and in her heart Mrs. Danvers wished it had not been used:—but she rallied a little, and told Mrs. Partridge she should like “to see her book.” It was quickly submitted to her; and she laid down five sovereigns for the wiping off of fifteen separate accounts, keeping it studiously concealed from Major Dacre.

Next, for the “Hole in the Wall” public-house, which was quickly visited by the Major.

“Mrs. Pettit, you will get dinner for two or three dozens on —”

“Saturday, I think, sir, is it not?” And the Major walked within the bar. A man was asleep there, with a sort of shovel hat on.

“Who have we here?”

“The godly minister, who attends widows of a Sunday, to—”

“Eat their mutton and stewed artichokes,—is it not?”

The Major purposely raised his voice, and the man awoke.

“What, Mr. Tramp! Where are your goods? I want to make a bargain for all manner of things.”

Tramp ran into a back room, and exhibited a tempting variety of buckles, brooches, combs, thimbles, bracelets, smelling-bottles, and rings without number. “What might Major Dacre want?”

“To make presents to all the good women and pretty girls in the village. What shall we say for Mrs. Sparks—a bit of a flame of yours—eh, master Tramp!”

“Sir, the flame is extinguished—it expired under her own mismanagement. There was not sufficient unction of the spirit about her.”

“Then we can’t revive *that* by any of *your gear*, Mr. Tramp; and I wish you a good day. But, is Mrs. Smithers defective in the like manner?”

Mr. Tramp, having lost one opportunity of making a good bargain, was determined not to lose another; and roundly affirmed that Mrs. Smithers was, in all respects, inwardly and outwardly, as a woman thriving in grace, ought to be. No attentions upon her could be thrown away. The Major purchased a few of the more necessary articles—

and laid out a pretty round sum on account of Phoebe Cotton. He would have cleared half the box if his bride-elect had not come up, and strongly protested against a further invasion of the purse.

The Major then visited the disconsolate Mrs. Sparks. He found her alone, dull, and abstracted.

“What was the matter?”

“Alas! sir, every body is going to be happy but myself. Even my servant maid last night ran away from me, which accounts for my letting your honour in myself.”

“Come, cheer up, widow, and join the happy circle speedily to assemble at the Queen’s Head on the marriage ‘of my nephew.’”

“Is it *true*, sir, what I hear — that *you* are going to be married also?”

“ALL BUT,—my good Mrs. Smithers. But why so sad?”

“Major Dacre need hardly ask. My Sabbath-comforter has deserted me.”

“Do you mean Tramp, the pedlar?”

“Tramp, the pedlar! Oh! no, sir. I mean Mr. Quaver, who preaches godly words at the Tabernacle.”

“Pooh, pooh, my good widow!—they are one and the same—and I have half emptied his travelling box of its contents. What will *you* have out of it?”

“Me, sir! me! I scorn his trash, and would not give a four-penny piece for the whole of his rubbish.”

“This is a pretty comb, edged with mother-o’-pearl. Your brown locks would not look the worse for it on Reginald’s wedding day?”

“It is, indeed, most pretty; but if it come from my faithless Sabbath instructor——”

“It comes from *me*. Put it in your hair, and consult your glass: and I will wait till you decide.”

Mrs. Sparks quickly placed herself opposite her glass. “Indeed, sir, it does look very becoming.”

“Then it is yours. Remember, Saturday”—and off darted the donor to Woodbine Lodge, with Mrs. Danvers under his arm.

“Well,” said the widow, “was there ever anything half so generous?—but I wish that *scamp*, as well as Tramp, had had nothing to do with it.” She fixed it again and again upon her head—and her eyes got brighter at every gaze. “Come, come,” said she, “there’s no saying *whose* turn may be *next*.”

Mrs. Markham, the vicar’s lady, paid a special, and in part secret, visit to Mrs. Tucker, the village schoolmistress. She was determined to have a plum cake two feet in diameter, encrusted with white sugar,

and covered with white satin bows—and to *that* child who could spell a word of the most numerous syllables, from the 10th chapter of Nehemiah, she would give the largest slice of the cake. Knowing this, all the upper class set to work, each with a determination to conquer. The result will be told in the next chapter.

Meanwhile, the Squire and Reginald Cranmer had made a grave assault upon the Queen's Head, in order to arrange matters for the leading festival of the village. There was a large and smoothly-shaven lawn in the rear; upon which, some forty years ago, the *Magnates* of the parish used to assemble on a Saturday evening. A syllabub was prepared—and bowls were resorted to; and it is yet an unsettled point whether the Squire used to beat the Major, or *vice versâ*. Here, too, on the same evenings, till eleven o'clock, there used to be dances round the May-pole: and here Mrs. Thimbleton and Mrs. Thorpe vied for the mastery over each other. The benches were filled with spectators, and it was usually agreed that the former had the highest bound, but the latter the more graceful movement. Mrs. Tucker, too, had shown off to perfection upon this lawn; while, among the "rougher sex," the morris dance, quarter staff, and wrestling, gave sometimes a fearful variety to the scene. But those days were probably gone for

ever. The dinner was bespoke by the Squire and his future son-in-law for about from fourscore to a hundred. A laurel branch was to encircle the sign of the Queen's Head, while her Majesty's bust was daily expected from London to be placed in the centre of the long table. The very best beer was to be measured out ; but the strictest attention paid to the maintenance of sobriety ; and, above all, it was expressly stipulated, that the memorable party who figured away by their deep potations at Dacre Hall,* should not renew such a scene of dead-drunkenness on the approaching festival. The Squire insisted upon the vicar's churchwarden, Mr. Stigwood, taking the top of the table, and Mr. Hancock, the parish churchwarden, the bottom.

"That's right, sir, that's orthodox"—observed old Cornwell, the master of the house.

Things being thus settled among the villagers, there would be nothing to do for them all but to drink and to talk, as we have before remarked, of the coming wedding. Nor, to speak the truth, was there much backwardness displayed in the indulgence of the same talk by the inmates of Hasleby Park and Dacre Hall. Nobody seemed to be sluggish of foot. Poor Mrs. Ponton, with her housekeeper, Mrs. Hull, were half dead with fatigue. Caroline lent a helping hand where she

* See page 108, before.

could—but Jemima insisted upon her keeping her eye steadily upon her *trussot* and her lover. Mr. Randall first visited one party and then another. Fornham was equally active; but he could not always avoid Mrs. Tucker, who absolutely waylaid him for a little conjugal gossip.

“ Well, master Fornham; only forty-eight hours! ‘ ALL BUT—!’ Are you quite ready with your parchments?”

“ They will soon be ready for your perusal and approbation, Mrs. Tucker; and then all *must* be right.”

“ Dear me! I could not even spell one word of it—if it be done in the nasty black crooked way in which some of our church-yard inscriptions are done. What a huge bundle they look. Why, half the parish must be described in them; and yet, within what *very* narrow limits human bliss is contained!”

Fornham stared somewhat oddly at such *ethics* from such a quarter, and telling the speaker that he did not despair even of *her* felicity in the *same* way, pursued his journey. Next were seen the more quiet movements of the Vicar and the Curate, with their respective ladies:—how they cheered the dull, strengthened the weak, and raised the languid. A thousand questions seemed to be asked at the same moment, to which it was of course impossible to

make a thousand answers ; and a stroll was proposed by the Curate to Woodbine Lodge. There the Major would be necessarily found to receive them. It was the first visit after the intelligence of her intended marriage had been announced under the countenance of her second husband ; and the meeting was one of the utmost cordiality and kindness. There was no artificial feeling among the whole party. It was not for Mrs. Danvers to come skipping backwards and forwards, or tumble up stairs, like Marian Cranmer or Jemima Ponton. She had a distinct and intelligible part to perform. Her serene brow was evidence of her tranquil heart. Her whole countenance was mantled over with that calm and fixed feeling of inward delight, which seemed to assure the world that her choice was as happy as wise. But the Major seemed to break out into second youth again : his action was more buoyant and free ; his voice more clear and powerful ; his attentions, on all sides, unremitting. He thanked his kind pastors for their visit to the Lodge before the union ; he thanked the kinder inmate of that Lodge for the promptitude and kind-heartedness of her reception of such visitors. Cakes, wine, sandwiches—what would they like ?

“ Press your friends, my dear, to partake of what your little larder may afford ”—was his affectionate out-break, within ten minutes of their arrival.

But there is more important matter to notice. Towards the evening of the day preceding the nuptials, and about an hour before the ceremony of signing the settlements took place, it was the determined intention of Reginald Cranmer and Caroline Ponton, once more and for the last time, to revisit the ancient chapel, and to renew and confirm all the vows of a betrothed attachment. Nothing could get this whim out of their heads. It was thoroughly mutual, and as firmly fixed as it was reciprocal. The sun had scarcely sunk, when, on a preconcerted signal, they were to arrive, by different channels, at the chapel-gate—to lull suspicion and to baffle curiosity. All the marriage-papers were at Thornborough Abbey, whither the Major had requested his own might be brought. The owner of Woodbine Lodge would necessarily dine at the Abbey.

A little after eight, Reginald rose from table—every body supposing that he had only gone to the ladies. He sought his hat—and by a circuitous route, along an old holly-hedge, made for the chapel. No one was there—but the door was open—and he went in.

“Caroline!” he said, softly. The echo replied, “Carey!” and all was hushed. Not the sound of an approaching step, nor of a human voice. This was strange—very strange. He made for the ves-

try—the door was locked ; but he thought he heard something like a “ hem,” faintly articulated.

“ My Caroline !” he repeated.

“ Oh, God !” answered some one within.

How might all this be? Reginald was bewildered ; but his bewilderment was yet stronger, when, on the entrance-door opening, he observed his beloved Caroline hurrying to him, with a shuffling and uncertain tread. “ What was the matter ?”

“ You have not a minute to spare. They are all outrageous for you to sign.”

“ Let them do as they list ; do you come with me, for two minutes only.” She consented, hesitatingly.

“ Do you remember your first resolve ?”

“ But is there any necessity to *repeat* it ? Some ragamuffin republican—hark ! there is some one in the vestry ?”

“ There is, indeed, my Caroline ; and there are two *out* of the vestry. I cannot marry you till you renew your vows ?”

“ Away,” said she, “ I fear nothing !”

Caroline quickly recovered herself, and a feeling approaching the superhuman seemed to possess her when she thus addressed Reginald :—“ To the altar—direct—let us die, as we have lived, together. *THERE.*” But the cushions had been taken away by the last visitors. “ Upon the *stone*,” said she—and she knelt : Reginald by the side of her.

He renewed his vow ; and he kissed the hand that had returned his pressure.

“ *Can't you wait till to-morrow morning ?*” screamed a shrill voice, as if from a side window.

They looked : there was nobody to see : they rose. There was nothing to fear above, below, and around ; all was still as death. But the rushing, egressing figure !—perhaps a mere phantasy of the imagination. They left the chapel joyous of heart, and were within a dozen steps of the entrance, when the whole company rushed out in pursuit of them.

Our couple, having fairly recovered their wits, parried every thrust, and reduced the whole tale to a mere ramble, for the last time, in their favourite hawthorn walk. And now the eventful moment of SIGNATURE had arrived. Reginald begged he might not hear the whole read over. Mr. Randall and Fornham said it was indispensable : but they would curtail as much as possible. The Major said the reading of a law deed was like a dose of *opium* in its effects.

“ Come, come sir, we may surprise you after all,” said Mr. Randall ; to whom the reading of the Cranmerian settlement was confided.

It consisted of three skins of parchment, and gave the bride the power of willing away much property—should she survive the husband. As

all the preliminary points had been before solemnly settled, not a word was said—except that when, unknown to the Major, there was a clause that, in default of issue by the contracting parties, and in case of issue by “Edward Dacre and Isabella Danvers,” the *latter* should come into a pretty good slice of the Cranmerian property. Before reading this important clause, the widow stole out of the room ; and Mrs. Cranmer begged her brother would attend her. Upon the Major’s being made acquainted with it, on his return, his generous feelings seemed to know no bounds. “Reginald should and SHALL have a family. I INSIST upon it :”—and he went up to him to give him his *determination* upon the subject : shaking him by both hands in the heartiest possible manner. Caroline at the moment looking as one bewildered.

Mr. Randall, having finished the reading, said aloud, “The parties will be pleased to SIGN !”

All was hushed. Reginald Cranmer stepped forward, and never brandished his pen with a bolder or a better grace. Caroline rose—and sat down again. Her mother ran to her, and lifted her up in a measure. Still she resumed her seat—requesting only another minute’s breathing time. Then Reginald advanced towards her, and said in a very deep tone of voice, and with a piercing stedfast look, “Caroline, this is unworthy of us *both*.”

She rose, and begged his arm. He conducted her to the table: put the pen in her hand—and said, “NOW!”

She still hesitated: and then concentrating her shattered nerves, said aloud, “AM I WORTHY OF YOU?”

“Sign! sign!” exclaimed the enraptured lover.

“Sign! sign!” exclaimed the impatient Major.

And she signed with a firm hand, knitting her brows; and fell insensibly into Reginald’s arms. She was conducted to Julia’s boudoir.

Mr. Fornham read the marriage settlement between the Major and Mrs. Danvers; which was no sooner done, than both the former and the latter rose, coolly and methodically, to put their hands to the deed:—no speech—no apostrophe—no heroics. Having both signed, Major Dacre saluted Isabella Dacre very affectionately. But our presence is immediately required in Miss Cranmer’s boudoir, where Julia and her mother, with Mr. and Mrs. Ponton, were assembled to bestow every attention to the agitated Caroline Ponton.

“Mrs. Cranmer,” resumed our heroine, in the most calm and collected manner, “I owe you every apology which a humble spirit and an agitated heart can offer. I have been too long at war with my own bosom. I have harboured there a sus-

picion of—MYSELF!—that your son had placed me upon too lofty a pedestal in his own gallant breast: that he worshipped me as I ought *not*—as I *deserved not*—to be worshipped. What can I say to *you*? And what can I do for HIM?”

“Love him to eternity!”—was the exclamation of the devoted Reginald Cranmer, who rushed in at the moment of these words being concluded.

“Thank God!—thank God!” exclaimed Caroline; “all doubt and mistrust and misery are banished for ever! But the voice in the vestry—tell me?”

“You know poor Mary Ingram,” said Reginald, “she is always haunting the precincts of the chapel. She said she wished to make a *noise* upon the occasion, to try your nerves and my fortitude. Poor thing! I hope the parish authorities will keep a good eye upon her. I have found out the wicked urchin whose vocal predictions have annoyed you upon every visit to the chapel. It is that rogue, Ned Quick, apprenticed to Mr. Lepla, the hatter. How he got intelligence of your intended visit, though I *have* my suspicion, I cannot possibly conceive; but having that intelligence, he took his queue accordingly. And now, my BEST OF WIVES—”

“Not yet, not yet,” said Squire Ponton.

“ Yes, and for ever !” exclaimed the betrothed.

To describe an evening party, where such serious results were to ensue on the following day, were a sad waste of time, if not perversion of taste ; and we therefore leave them all to their night-caps till the morrow.

CHAPTER XI.

THE WEDDING DAY.

"UP, and be doing, ye lazy jades!" said Mrs. Hull, the housekeeper at Thornborough Abbey, as she traversed the servants' bed-rooms at *five* in the morning.

"Up and be doing," said Mrs. Thorpe, on the same errand at Dacre Hall, at *four* in the morning; "ye are idle, ye are idle."*

The butler sought the ancient ivory horn, and blew a stirring blast: *tone, tone, tavernne; tavernne; tone, tone, tavernne!*† "Who sleeps on such a day? what ho! ye sluggards!"

"Sluggards?" said the under-butler, "I don't know what you mean by sluggards; only this I know, that it is but just four o'clock, and the sun has not yet quitted his bed."

* Exod. v. 17.

† From Randle Holmes' *Accidence of Armoury*, 1604, folio: one of the most amusing old folios in existence; and before quoted, at page 34. It is, however, a volume of the extremest difficulty and rarity to find in a complete state—such as it is in the collections of Earl Spencer and the Right Hon. Thomas Grenville.

“Talk not thus, you varlet—see you not the top of the village church tinted with gold? Who sleeps on such a day as this? What ho! there!”—and the consequential Major Domo walked backwards and forwards, as if he liked to hear the echo of his steps and of his voice. Dash, Spruce, Ginger, and Quince, favourite dogs—and the former emphatically distinguished in our first volume—all got loose, and came scampering along the corridor, sniffing at the *Genealogical Tree*.

“Who’s awake here?”—said Ned Chowler, the game-keeper at Hasleby Park; while he beat about the bushes and out-houses, and gave a thrilling whistle which made the horses in the stable prick up their ears, and set all the dogs yelping and barking. A half a dozen horses at grass, trotted and neighed, and flung up their heads, and threw out their heels, as if they were summoned to some extraordinary feat.

Next, the whole village seemed to throw off its somnolency at one and the same moment. The clarionet of Tibbetts was screaming in the distance. Hand-bells sent forth a subdued sound. All were scudding about or in preparation at home. The sun was now up in the bright blue sky. The birds were in full carol among the branches.

“The low of distant kine”.....

stole sweetly upon the ear. The milk maids were singing their songs, as they filled their pails. The heavy dew predicted a bright, if not hot day. The thin gossamer webs, the fairy productions of the night, extended from branch to spray, in light wavy threads. Every thing and every body below exhibited one of those characteristic, cheerful pictures, which belong only to rural scenery, animated and enlivened by the delicious freshness of the morning.

Presently the female portion of the village population began to bestir themselves. Mrs. Thimbleton was the first to rise, and to carol her matin lay.

“What a morning! How sweet: how pure! Who would sleep?—and especially on *such* a morning! The tower of the village church is bathed in gold; which reminds me of my golden pippins!” And away she went, brushing off the heavy dew of the morning, as she pricked her way into the orchard. She shook both the trees: not an apple fell. “What a pity they won’t wait another fortnight, before they tie this troublesome marriage knot!”

“Troublesome!” shouted Mrs. Partridge, (who had been shouting at the orchard gate for admission); “troublesome, do you call it?”

“Ay, child; troublesome enough to *me*, it has been; but if”—

“ If another Mr. Cranmer were to pop”—

“ Another Major Dacre you mean!—You forget, Rebecca, my years; though I own, I would not hesitate if one much younger than the Major”—

“ Frank Cotton, eh?—but he is spliced for life. I heard there had been some flirtation between you.”

“ Who believes village-gossip? But come, Mrs. Partridge, let’s to our P’s and Q’s. Hark! the church clock has struck seven. Two hours, and then!”—

“ We shall be both smothered in finery,” replied the Chandler-shop keeper.

Sweet the breath of early morn,
Sings John Milton;
Sweet the chirping on each thorn,
Sings John Milton;

verses, botched together from the great original, by Roger Payne, the village-poet, and sung in a grumbling gruff voice by Sam. Middleditch, as he was hastening to the residence of the poet. But Mrs. Smithers was in advance; her countenance in excitement; her step hurried; her whole bearing betokening some stirring event.

“ Mrs. Thimbleton—such a dream! Dreadful beyond expression.”

“ Judge of dreams by their contraries.”

"Well, then, only think! I dreamt that our young master, dressed all in white, and his lady all in black, with some one carrying a coffin behind them, proceeded to the church; and the wedding ceremony being finished, Mr. Reginald locked his wife up in the coffin, turned the key, put it into his pocket, and whistled the tune of the 'Plough-boy,' as he returned to his mother's house. Oh! I am shocked. Do gather me a pippin, that I may crunch it—and refresh myself with its moisture."

"You silly woman!" exclaimed the golden pippin merchant to the chandler-shopkeeper, "you silly woman; what does this mean, but that neither party will see a coffin these twenty-five or thirty years to come at least."

"But do you think they will *then*?"

"Why, perhaps, *that* may be time sufficient; though it will bring neither of them to *my* years. As to the key and the locking up, it only means that Mr. Cranmer possesses the master-key of her *affections*; and no one is to take it from him."

Mrs. Sparks now exhibited her spruce figure.

"Did you see nothing in *white* last night?"

"Yes, the miller.

"Nor in *black*?"

"Yes, your godly instructor—retreating from the Jolly Butchers."

This was too palpable a hit, and Mrs. Sparks felt it but too sensibly.

"You might have spared my feelings, Mrs. Thimbleton?"

"And mine, too," remarked the mistress of the Jolly Butchers.

"Why, what's the matter now, good folks?" exclaimed Mrs. Partridge.

"I have been served the scurviest trick imaginable."

"Thank yourself, thank yourself, Mrs. Smithers. This is the reward of seduction."

"Seduction! you good-for-nothing—"

"Away, both of you! let's have no brawls or squawls on the WEDDING DAY of the parties so speedily to be united."

"But it is true—it is true, Mrs. Thimbleton; and don't desert me at this trying moment. I hope Miss Ponton will be luckier in her choice!"

"Pray speak out, Mrs. Smithers; though you have cruelly wronged me."

"Yes, yes, Mrs. Sparks, it is too true. That heartless wretch has been seen and watched for this last week, walking with Ann Pettit by the river side, across—"

"Why, Mrs. Smithers, remember that Ann Pettit is the prettiest girl in the village."

"I'm not so *sure* of that," said Mrs. Smithers,

tossing her head up, and running her eye complacently *adown* her own figure—as if it should be inferred that, for *shape*, she could match Ann Pettit. “But which of the two be the prettier,” running her hand slightly across her stomacher, “I care not a *rushlight*.”

“Do not be personal,” said Mrs. Partridge; “you forget that I *sell* rushlights, and will say that better are no where to be found.”

“No, Mrs. Partridge, I am never personal; but I will say this—whether Ann Pettit be, or be not, as Mrs. Thimbleton describes her, her sweetheart is the *ugliest dog* in Christendom!”

“Hurrah!” cried Mrs. Sparks, “and so he is. To see his wide lantern-jaws, when he was munching my mutton and shovelling the stewed artichokes down his gaping throat”—

“This is *very* personal,” rejoined Mrs. Thimbleton; “but you two are now friends?”

“Are we *not*?” replied Mrs. Sparks.” And the two widows, lately so burning hot with the lava of jealousy, hardly knew how to embrace each other lovingly enough. It was a happy commencement of this eventful day.

One circumstance I had nearly forgotten to mention. It was, that the vicar’s lady, Mrs. Markham, whose propensities to the *pharmacopœia* have been observed upon in the second chapter of this

work, had a particular conference with Mrs. Tucker as to the general state of health of her little flock. The schoolmistress, secretly humouring Mrs. Markham's failing (we all love to be humoured in our failings), told her she thought a little distribution from the *medical chest* might have a good effect with some of the bigger boys and girls, who had been of late sadly addicted to eating hard apples. These children underwent the usual process of examination, before mentioned; and the alternate pill and powder was administered with the usual good effects. Indeed, such a procession of healthy looking, cherry-cheeked lads and lasses, as they moved on to the church on the WEDDING DAY, had been scarcely remembered. Nor, while upon the *medical* topic, must it be concealed from the rising generation, that our gallant Major renewed his acquaintance with his favourite *calomel* on the third day preceding his union.

We touch a higher theme—as we approach the bridegrooms and brides. It was past eight, when the lady's-maid came breathless to her mistress at Hasleby Park, that "she could not wake Miss Ponton."

"Heaven befriend us!" replied the mistress;—"but we have no *Juliet* scene to go through, I hope."

"Why, Caroline, lady-bird, awake I say!" ex-

claimed Mrs. Ponton, as she approached her bridal daughter; "awake to happiness, love."

Still she slumbered.

"Has any one drugged her evening posset?" said the Squire.

"What ho!—help!—my daughter!"

"Is WIDE AWAKE!" exclaimed the facetious betrothed. "Never have I had so long and so sweet a sleep. It is late, I fear."

"Up, and be doing, my child, and God will prosper you. You have a long and fatiguing day to endure."

"What of that, dearest mother, I can now endure anything."

Her parents, running this way and that—calling in Jemima, and inadvertently—in the very burst of their happiness—Reginald.

"No, my dear mother: not yet," with an affected gravity. Caroline is at her toilet. Her beautiful brown hair needed very little *treatment*.

A small clustre of orange blossoms hung down over each ear, canopying her ringlets. She wore nothing on her head but a long flowery blond veil, which could not conceal the beauty of its form: and never did her "lady-like" figure appear to greater advantage. Her dress consisted of the identical white satin gown in which she had won her husband's heart at his uncle's memorable

fancy ball. And her voice never before sounded so sweetly, as when she asked her sister, Jemima, "how she liked her?"

"*Like* you?" replied the animated and affectionate sister; "I LOVE you—and never so much as now. You look a resplendent bride, every inch of you!—and you are my dear and only sister, Caroline. Hark!"

It was Reginald Cranmer—merely to touch the key note of preparation; and as we do not care "two brass buttons" how he was dressed, we shall proceed to Woodbine Lodge; where by half-past eight of the o'clock sat the widow Danvers in full bridal attire, never looking better—and in momentary expectation of the arrival of the Major's barouche to conduct her to church. Whatever might have been the feelings of this lady on her former match, we have no means of ascertaining, nor would it be very relevant to inquire. It was certain that no approaching union could call forth a more grateful and affectionate feeling than that which now awaited her. The bridegroom had fairly won his bride. His delicate, unintermitting, and gentle attention, had first excited her surprise, and secondly warmed her heart. Never did a woman anticipate the approaching moment which was to unite her destinies with another, more calmly, and more conscious of future happiness, than did

this amiable lady. And into what a family to marry ! What an abundant provision had been made for her on the demise of her husband—which she trusted in God she should never live to experience ! Thus her mind assumed that sort of indescribable calmness which is beyond the power of words to impress, and which so rarely happens in a world where human beings seem to act only from violent impulses ; from extremes of joy or of sorrow.

But now THE WEDDING DAY assumed a very general and decided character, and it should seem as if all the unmarried couples in the parish were about to be united, from the smartness of their attire, and the gaiety of their demeanour. But where is Roger Payne and his ballad—

“How a dainty lady was married to a worthy young gentleman.”

He approaches at the head of a cavalcade of every denomination, immediately followed by Scrimes, Tibbetts (with his clarionet), Bunn, and Middle-ditch. They are all silent as he chaunts through his nose

Oh ! come, and listen maidens fair,
I pray you lend an ear ;
The rose is sweet beyond compare ;
That ROSE is even *here*.

The lasses call it CAROLINE ;
With blossoms white and sweet ;
Where every charm and grace combine
To make the form complete.

Oh ! such a maid hath ne'er been seen
To deck a bridal day ;
And such a swain, with such a mien,
To bear *that Rose* away.

He'll wear it in his own true breast,
And shelter it from harm ;
'Tis there she'll find the safest nest ;
There, freed from all alarm !

Then, Reginald and Caroline,
Provoke my sportive lay ;
Their virtue and their worth combine
My homage true to pay.

May Heaven in showers its blessings send,
To crown their days in peace ;
And when this stormy life shall end
* * * * *

Roger never could satisfy himself about the *concluding* verse, because he would not part with its rhyming companion. Scrimes made several suggestions, but he would not hear of it ; and Tibbetts, though he blew the six stanzas pretty lustily through the ventage holes of his clarionet, always declared that it was the worst piece of poetry which the mole-catcher had ever botched together. The importance of the subject seemed to oppress him. His respect, and even profound regard, for the parties about to be united, was perfectly unfeigned ; for as he had a bitter hatred of Silvertop, he looked upon Reginald Cranmer as the hero who had swept that plague from the village.

But the object which won equally all attentions and all hearts, was Phoebe Cotton's "*Wedding Garland*" of leaves and flowers, of all hue and description ; the white necessarily prevailing. It might have been twenty inches in diameter, and was hung, by the fair hands of her who wrought it, over the church-porch, so that every one, on entrance, could not fail to see and to notice it. The truth, however, must not be suppressed, that the fingers of the virgin bride had, in a considerable degree, contributed to the tastefulness of the arrangement of the whole. Major Dacre and Reginald Cranmer stopped full two minutes, impeding the general procession, to gaze and to commend. "Phoebe shall have a sovereign from me for *this*," said the Major. "And another from *me*, too," answered the nephew.

But the procession has begun—"drums beating and colours flying"—to the church-porch ; to receive the company. Not the sound of a church-bell was necessarily yet heard. But the Major's barouche is at the gate of Woodbine Lodge, and who should be in it but its illustrious owner, with *Dash* by the side of him, as brisk as a bee, whisking his tail and suppressing his joyous bark. The Major alighted quickly, and helping in his "better half," (dare we venture thus prematurely upon such a title?) desired that she might be gently driven to Dacre

Hall, to be taken up in his sister's close carriage, while Mr. Clutterbuck's chariot was expected every moment to convey himself. What seemed very curious, the dog kept in the carriage, fixing his eyes steadily on his new mistress, and exhibiting such demonstrations of joyous feeling, as could not be mistaken. Mrs. Danvers forgot the snowy whiteness of her kid gloves, when she patted him very freely on the head and back.

And now, in good earnest, the procession began. First came all the dear little misses and masters from Mrs. Tucker's school, each with a white satin bow on the left side, and the upper classes of the girls with a narrow white riband round their foreheads, and a white rose in their right hands. The schoolmistress herself might have been mistaken for a huge orange dragon—the gown, worn on a recent occasion, being exhibited on the present. It were difficult to describe her head gear, in which every ornament seemed to be striving, the one with the other, for the mastery; while bits of flowers, such as geranium, sweet pea, and honeysuckle, were all so huddled and squeezed together, that it was impossible to come to the exact contents of this key-stone to the arch. However, the wearer was as happy and blithe as a king-fisher, though not quite of such rapid motion.

“Really,” said she to Mr. Thorpe, “this is a

day that operates like a cordial to the stomach," and she patted her stomach accordingly. "The heavens drop fatness on such a morning as this, Mr. Thorpe."

"Come, come, Mrs. Tucker, you shall have a better cordial and fatter entertainment than this, by and by—but fall into your ranks there. Do you hear, Master Brook and Ann Pryke?"

The carriages had all brought their precious cargoes. The church was quite thronged. First came the two churchwardens, Mr. Stigwood and Mr. Hancock, each with a large bouquet in the button-hole, and a white staff, at the top of which was attached a white satin bow, edged with silver cord. Then came Mr. Randall in full hymeneal plumage, and by the side of him the converted Fornham. Each held a large bow in the hand. Mr. Clutterbuck with Mr. Ruffham; Mr. Comberbach and Mr. Marsfield; Dr. Glossop escorted Mrs. Ponton; Lord and Lady Ashton; THE BRIDE, Caroline Ponton, with her father—and oh! how sweetly she looked, and how softly she moved! Her personal carriage was always admitted to be perfect. There is a sort of beauty more captivating than mere regularity of features: but the "Academy of Compliments" has been so often exhausted in commendation of Caroline Ponton, that she must even pass on to the altar, hanging on her father's arm.

Next followed the second Bride, leaning on the arm of her future sister-in-law, Mrs. Cranmer. As Isabella Danvers moved towards the altar, there was a general pointing of fingers, marking her out as the future Mrs. Dacre—for the village was comparatively ignorant of this second match.

“Heaven bless her!” said Mrs. Thimbleton; “how sweetly pretty her apple-green bonnet and *japanese* rose look! What a *camilla* she wears on her stomacher! Widows, you know, may be gayer than maidens in their attire.”

“Peace! peace there!” cried Thorpe; “order! peace there!”

Now came the TWO BRIDEGROOMS—uncle and nephew—arm in arm, smiling, walking out lustily, bowing to the right and left; the uncle with a rose, the nephew with a geranium, in his button-hole. They were all about the altar in five minutes, with the Vicar in *pontificalibus*—to unite the *younger couple* first. The Major insisted upon this, as well as for a separate ceremony for himself—to be performed by the Curate. He did not like *herding* human beings in the marriage fold, and thought the ceremony could not be rendered too impressive.

Cranmer stood like an animated *Antinous*, (or *Mercury*, if it must be so?) by the side of his beautiful and bashful bride; whose eyes seemed to be inclined downwards, to the identical hassock

(both hassocks having been brought to the church expressly for the purpose) upon which she had thrice knelt before, in rehearsal of the solemn part which she was that day to perform. The bridesmaids, headed by Julia Cranmer and Jemima Ponton, (the latter in tears,) enfiladed the altar. Never did the former assume a more beautiful and interesting air—attired in the very dress which she wore on the marriage of her sister Marianne,—a dress which elicited the warmest admiration of Mrs. Thimbleton. Julia was in the full possession of all her best looks; and as Sir Benjamin Burridge was *not* present, that baronet was spared the agony of fixing his eyes upon fruit which it was forbidden him to touch.

The bearing of our hero was delightful: so firm, but so gentle and so considerate; sustaining his bride when she seemed to want strength, and enunciating, in a tone of voice so thoroughly distinct, calm, and yet emphatic, that Caroline seemed to gather strength and courage at every sound. The ring is laid upon the book . . . and fastened upon the bridal finger. They kneel . . . and Heaven, through the worthy priest, is called upon to “bless them,” in a prayer, remarkable alike for its simplicity and solemnity. Then follows the brief and emphatic joining of right hands, with the interdiction of “no man putting asunder those whom God had joined!”

“I should be glad to see the man, who would

attempt it !” said Tom Crane to himself, hugging himself—as if he longed to crack the crown of the trespasser.

On the completion of the ceremony, Reginald Cranmer saluted his bride—a good old fashion ; which I desire never to see laid aside. He then conducted her (hanging down her head, and her arm slightly trembling within Reginald’s) to the vestry, surrounded by every one belonging to her.

“You have behaved like a heroine, my child,” said the enraptured father.

“My dear Mrs. Reginald Cranmer,” said her equally enraptured mother—and embraced her tenderly.

But we must not cut the thread of our narrative. There is more work to go through. The Vicar, on quitting the altar, (to the infinite astonishment of the congregation,) went into the vestry ; where stood his worthy curate, Mr. Thomson, prepared to unite the second couple. As he was raising his foot upon the first step of the altar, Major Dacre, with his lady under his arm, whispered something in his ear ; to which the Curate seemed ready to assent : and the service was immediately entered upon—and continued, all through,—to its very close : the Vicar having read only about half of it—with a due mixture, however, of the civil and religious parts ; the latter being too frequently, and

too scandalously, omitted in marriages among the upper classes of society.

"That's the marriage service for *me*!" shouted Mrs. Thimbleton. "None of your *half* measures—according to my notion! and Mr. Thomson shall be the man to do my business, if I ever come to the altar again!"

"You may say that with safety, 'Mrs. Chatter-box,'"—growled forth Middleditch.

"Silence, order,—I insist!" said Thorpe, now habited in his red trunk hose:—Scrimes reiterated the observance of order; and they were silent while the Major and Mrs. Dacre moved from the altar to the vestry.

Then broke forth the bells; peal upon peal; "treble bobs," and, of course, "bob *Majors*." The crowd huzzaed; and as we need not repeat what of course has been already described at the marriage of Charles Ponton and Marianne Cranmer, we may only remark that, all forms and ceremonies having been duly observed in the vestry, the whole company prepared to leave the church. The Major insisted upon his nephew's *precedence*:—he inherited a noble and a venerable name:

"——— clarum et venerabile nomen

Gentibus, et multum nostræ quod proderat urbi.'

Away went the happy Reginald, and, if possible, the yet happier bride—amidst the clapping of hands,

the screaming of voices, the huzzas of hundreds ! Reginald's high heart now sunk low. It was altogether a moment of exquisite trial ; and the very effort to maintain a calm bearing and the most resolute self-possession, during the ceremony, had produced a re-action of considerable pain. He sunk into the corner of his mother's carriage ; and putting one hand over his eyes, and shaking the other out of the window, he was conveyed to the Abbey. There stood the servants of both families, all in a row, to receive the bride and bridegroom ; Mrs. Hull's throat and shoulders being quite smothered in white bows. Next rolled up Major and Mrs. Dacre, with Dash between them, who did nothing but yelp and bark for joy at the surrounding villagers : then came other carriages, filled with visitors, far and near. The *déjeûner à-la-fourchette* might, probably, have consisted of forty guests, including all the magistrates of the neighbouring bench. The last to arrive was Sir Benjamin Burridge, Bart. The bridemaids, with Nicholas Tynedale, had a round table to themselves.

Our principal business lies in the village ; and yet it ought to have been observed that Mr. Thorpe was allowed by his generous master to have a little *coterie* to himself at Dacre Hall ; whither all the widows, so frequently mentioned in these pages, were earnestly requested to attend. It was Mrs.

Spark's first day of wearing colours, and her whole drapery seemed to exhibit the refracted rays of the rainbow. She was so pleased with her harlequin garments, "all bedight with bridal bows," that she would frequently turn round and round, like a kitten after its tail, and challenge the applause of those about her.

But the venerable butler was soon besieged by the villagers.

"Master Thorpe, we want a blast from your horn?"—and too prompt and happy to comply, he put it to his mouth; standing on the upper terrace, in front of the house, and blew "a brave and long-continued blast," heard by those seated in the merry hall of Thornborough Abbey. It was responded to by Tom Crane, upon the French horn. Away, then, they all go to the Queen's Head, again giving Mrs. Thimbleton three cheers, and shaking every branch of her golden pippin trees, in the hope that some dozens might fall off; but the fruit adhered to the branches.

"Alas!" said their owner; "it is the only damper of the day!"

"To the QUEEN'S HEAD!" roared Middleditch; and they all set forth, in gallant trim, preceded by a long striped pole, of white and pink, on the summit of which was fastened a magnificent nose-gay, tied together by white ribands.

There is no necessity to follow up the noisy doings at the Queen's Head; as that fête would necessarily be little more than a repetition of what occurred on the lawn at Dacre Hall, recorded a few pages back. Nothing, however, could exceed the general regularity, and even decorum, of the whole proceeding—except that we might notice, *en passant*, rather an awkward accident which befel the orange-satin gown of Mrs. Tucker, which received the greater portion of a tureen of green pea soup, owing to the unpardonable *gaucherie* of a female servant. The health of the Queen was drank with enthusiasm, “and might SHE soon be *happy* after the fashion of Mrs. Reginald Cranmer and Mrs. Dacre.” This was the amended toast of the mole-catcher; who blinked his eyes, and distended his chuckling mouth, as if he had outdone even the Lord Mayor of London in the art of toast-giving. Then followed “God save our gracious Queen!” sung by the mole-catcher and Mrs. Thimbleton, with the aid of Tibbett's clarionet; and were it not for the chorus, you might have mistaken it for the hundredth Psalm.

But we must take a peep at a more *recherché* circle, and move in the direction of Thornborough Abbey. The repast, rather than breakfast, was upon the most liberal and elegant scale. The Squire could not keep his chair five minutes con-

secutively, wishing to know how the happy couple were getting on in the *packing way*, especially after his daughter had retired to change her bridal for a travelling dress. Reginald, seated at the bottom of the table, ever and anon chided him.

“My dear sir, do not encumber your dear daughter, and my dearer wife, by your auxiliary interposition;” said he, laughingly, in the hope of stirring up our *Phlosboterotontodon* friend: whereupon Dr. Glossop rose and said—

“Mrs. Cranmer—and you, sir, her only and tenderly beloved son—in the absence of HER, whose feelings might be overpowered were she present, I rise to propose, first, the health and happiness—*usque ad tertiam stirpem*—of Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Cranmer; and secondly——”

“Hold, sir, hold: do not club, us together!” shouted the Major; and they all drank Dr. Glossop’s toast with enthusiasm. The toaster then continued—

“I now rise, madam, to propose health and happiness to a second union—Major and Mrs. Dacre!”

“But why omit the *usque ad tertiam stirpem*?” jumped up, and ejaculated Nicholas Tyndale—to the astonishment of the ladies, who, not knowing Latin, thought it the most important part of the Doctor’s speech. Major Dacre was upon his feet.

“Thank you, my dear Doctor, I commend your taste and discernment ; or, at any rate, you may add the ‘*stirps*’ part of your speech, when Mr. Tyndale and Jemima Ponton come to the altar.”

This was considered a most admirable parry ; though Mrs. Cranmer, as seated at the head of the table, thought it was treating the ladies somewhat cavalierly to confine the wit of the speeches to a dead and learned language : and she interdicted the introduction of the Latin tongue on every future toast.

We have noticed a small circular table, filled by the bridesmaids and a few of the more intimate friends. Here sat Julia Cranmer, the most beautiful woman in the party, every now and then exchanging merry words with her brother ; and suggesting, that, as time was getting on, and they had a long stage to go before evening, the happy pairs should be thinking of moving. At this moment Sir Benjamin Burridge, who had been dodging backwards and forwards, caught Miss Cranmer’s eye. “Would she allow him to have the honour of taking a glass of champagne with her ?” Julia accepted the challenge, even with a gracious smile. “She would have the honour of *bowing* to Sir Benjamin, but she had drank wine sufficient for the day.” This was taken in the very opposite sense in which it was intended to be taken. “There was more

honour in Miss Cranmer's *salutation*, than in all the wine of all the wine cellars in Christendom:" and the baronet made but one mouthful of the contents of the glass.

"Mrs. Cranmer," said he, "how comes it that the most beautiful lady in the company should not be marching in the steps of Miss Ponton and Mrs. Danvers?"

"That depends wholly upon herself, Sir Benjamin. She is entire mistress of her own movements. But you do not consider it *too late* for—"

"Oh, mercy, Heaven!" exclaimed the baronet, hanging a wild hope upon this declaration, as if it might lead to an *opening*—"no, no, no! Miss Cranmer has yet ten years to pass over her head, during which she may every day anticipate a proposal"—and Sir Benjamin hung down his head upon his breast.

Mr. Clutterbuck asked leave to bespeak the attention of the company. "Ladies and gentlemen, you will not permit me, I am sure, to be alone in the toast about to be proposed;—and you will drink it as you feel it. *Our amiable and excellent Hostess!*"

"God bless her!" said the Vicar.

"Amen,"—responded the Curate; and every one stood up, waved their glasses, and strove to outdo each other in the strength of their vociferations.

This was after the olden fashion, and who that had a heart could refuse his lusty sympathy? Mrs. Cranmer was overpowered, and asked permission to retire. This was the signal for a general uprising. But, in the mean time, where was our heroine? A message was whispered in the ear of Reginald. He was wanted up stairs, and he flew out of the room. His WIFE, (ay, we may now unobjectionably affix that word to her!) wished to see him for a minute in—Julia's boudoir. She was equipped for her journey; looking more interesting than ever. Reginald entered,—when Caroline thus addressed him:

“My dearest husband, I could not leave this house without begging you to call to mind what has taken place *here*. You promise me never to forget the boudoir of your sister Julia.”

“Only when I am thinking of *HER* who now occupies it;”—and they embraced each other with a fixed and assured conviction that their destinies were now settled beyond the possibility of any casualty to mar them. At that moment Julia entered, and a very affecting scene took place.

But the voice of Squire Ponton is heard on the staircase; “Come down, come down, dearest Caroline! the carriage is just whisking up to the door.” Caroline's heart had well nigh fainted within her.

There is *THAT*, about the moment of *final departure*, which causes all the graver and more overwhelming feelings to prevail. To say “farewell” to the *home* where you were cradled, or to *them* who had cradled you there—to think of the ever shifting scenes and “variableness of turning” which beset this mortal life—to dwell upon an *uncertainty* of fate, of *any* kind—and to be convinced how your *own* conduct may make that fate more or less tolerable—this, in the best regulated bosom of a female, must of necessity cause the brow to be thoughtful, and the heart to be distressed. And *SUCH PARENTS!*—such a father, and mother, and home!

“Oh, Reginald! forgive me if my spirit be a little sad and disquieted within me.”

“I should almost *loathe* you if it were *not*.”

Then came the father, the mother, and the sister. One after the other receive the trembling kiss of Caroline. The company crowd the passage—the villagers are all collected about the house.

“Clear the way, there!—let’s have a look at her—but not the last. There she goes!—her foot is as nimble as the rein-deer’s, as she jumps into the carriage.” These were the ready words of Fornham.

Reginald is following; but the Squire pulls him one way and the Major another.

“My child, my blessed boy!” said the mother:

The shouts of a hundred voices marked the moment of their departure : Tom Crane giving an additional impetus to their enthusiasm, by waving his hat and stamping his feet on the box.

"God bless 'em !" screamed all the females together ; while the clarionet of Tibbett was absolutely dreadful from its dissonant notes.

"Order, there ;" said Thorpe—"and please to make room for the ivory horn, for my master and his lady are quickly to follow them."

Up came the Major's carriage, like that of his nephew, drawn by four horses. The bridegroom led his interesting bride to the carriage door, and having helped her in, turned gracefully round, right and left, bowing to all the villagers ; and surely, such a SEXAGENARIAN as Major Dacre, never before, or since, sought the heart as well as the hand of his beloved.

A tremendous cheering accompanied the first start of the carriage ; but Thorpe was not only too affected to join, but even to raise the ivory horn to his lips. At length he gave, "*tone, tone, taverne ; taverne, tone, tone ; tone, tone, taverne :*" "never had he blown so long a blast. He would tell them all what it meant in the course of the evening."

The carriages were now entirely out of sight, but Reginald, not unmindful of former days, as

the carriage rolled along beneath the church-yard wall, *misconstrued* to his companion the Latin exclamation with which he had once bade her farewell* on the same spot : thus—

No more, my fondest Caroline, ADIEU !
Heaven crowns my happiness—in giving YOU.

* Vol. ii. page 98.

CHAPTER XII.

THE END.

ALL things have an end ; but an end to "CRANMER," in one sense, will I hope be the beginning of a long life in another. The stamp of fate, for good or for ill, is perhaps perilous to encounter ; and yet, who shrinks from the experiment ? Who has not a secret intimation, or at least desire, that his labours may add to the stock of harmless amusement, or useful instruction ? The world is wide enough, and the tastes of mankind are diversified enough, to justify the hope that CRANMER may "take his seat" in the circle of well educated, and well connected members of society ; but there are some few points requiring elucidation.

We have not yet quite cleared up the narrative of the preceding chapter. Mrs. Tucker's school-children have not yet been convened to spell the hardest words in the Xth. chapter of Nehemiah. Mrs. Thomson was in attendance when the senior class stood in a circle ; and a few of the hardest words were given for the spelling : as thus—

Tirshatha, Zidkijah, Malchijah, Meremoth, Ginethon, Hashabiah, Magpiash, Meshezabeel, Hallohesh, and Hashabnah.

There was some hesitation and a little stammering at first, but Mrs. Tucker coaxed and cheered them on—and, upon the whole, Ann Pryke and Elizabeth Nunn were declared to be the victors. To *them*, the larger slices of the cake were adjudicated; and to her, or him, who should soonest spell the word “marriage,” a slice of one degree less in cubical substance should be awarded. After floundering at “*marrige*,” and “*marage*,”—they stumbled upon the proper word. The cake was then entirely cut up and distributed; and each was treated with a glass of currant-wine to drink the healths of Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Cranmer, and Major and Mrs. Dacre. Then, after giving three screams, rather than cheers, the little rogues separated, and sought their respective homes: some, so tired from early rising and incessant excitement, that they were obliged to be carried up asleep, and to be undressed by their parents. They would long remember **THE WEDDING DAY.**

Meanwhile, the happy pairs had pushed a considerable way on their journey; the Major and his Lady towards Scarborough—Mr. and Mrs. Reginald Cranmer, in the direction of London, on their route to Charles and Marianne Ponton, in

the Tyrol. The Abbey and the Park seemed to have put on wings and flown away. The Squire and Mrs. Ponton had now parted with two of their establishment; and if Jemima remained, it was only to be carried off by Tyndale on the ensuing Christmas; so that "the house, (as Mrs. Ponton observed), would have the mournful silence of a tomb—on her being thus bereaved of her children."

"*Bereaved*, my dear!—say not so. Our children live, and will revisit us; and if Jemima be transferred to Coverdale Hall, she will be within a day's journey of the reach of even such old folks as ourselves; and besides, Charles will then be at home, and a fixture—and when was a house ever silent or dull where his jovial and ready wit was to be found? Come, come—cheer up—there is a bright gleam of happiness to tinge the evening of our days. You take on too sadly."

"So cheer'd he his sad wife, and she was cheer'd."

Mrs. Cranmer bore her *second* separation with admirable tact and good feeling. Her *first* (in the death of her beloved Maria,) was necessarily irreparable. She should go to her daughter, but that daughter could never return to her. The stamp of fate, or rather the decree of Providence, was here irreversible: and her first gush of feeling, when she retired to her private apartment—on the departure of Reginald—was absolutely insupportable.

She seemed to construe *absence* into *death*; and that Reginald had been severed from her in order to meet his sister in another and a better world. At any rate, there was a vacuum which could only be filled up by his presence. She wept aloud; and Julia, who heard her lamentation, was compelled to invade her privacy, and offer her consolation. The sight of the ONE REMAINING child was as balm to her agitated spirits: for she had actually imagined herself, for a little moment, to be destitute of *all* her children. "See here, my dear mother," (said Julia, shewing a letter just received from her sister Marianne), "what good news awaits you!"

"Marianne?" answered Mrs. Cranmer a little wildly—"I had absolutely forgotten her!"

"But she has not forgotten *you*—my dear mother: listen."

And Julia read a good portion of a long letter, in which the writer dwelt alternately upon the happiness of her condition, the beauty as well as novelty of the surrounding scenery, and above all upon the delightful hope of a re-union of families, when she returned to Hasleby Park.

"Tell my mother," said the amiable writer, "what a happy winter seems in store for us, under God's good providence: and that she must divide her whole time between the Abbey and the Park. A few short months, and then"—

“And then we shall all be as happy as the day is long,” added Julia.

In an instant, Mrs. Cranmer not only felt the full force of this logic, but chided herself for the indulgence of irrational sorrow.

“*You* will not leave me, Julia,” said she with a forced smile, “even if a certain Baronet were to make an effort to—”

“Pull me yet *closer* to you;—for his efforts would only operate in an inverse ratio. Do not—do not, mention his name: and yet I wish him as happy as he can wish himself.”

“That I doubt:—because I suspect I know what he would wish for, to render his happiness complete.”

“Anything but *me*; for I should only add to his misery.”

Now, it certainly might be considered somewhat odd, that a mother, who had been apparently bemoaning the absence of her children by marriage—with an implication that such an absence had a death-like air of desolation about it—should be, indirectly, urging her only remaining, and tenderly beloved child, to adopt the *same measure* of separation from the parental roof. But a *respectable union* has, at all times, great sway in a mother's breast; and it was admitted, on all hands, that the moral character of Sir Benjamin Burridge was

without a stain. The irresistible obstacle, however, could not be got over. We have seen that Julia Cranmer “could not *fancy* the man”—and she had too sensible, as well as lofty a spirit, to be *compelled* to fancy him. He might encircle her brows as well as her neck with brilliants beyond all price; but there would be a tight, though invincible string, threading those brilliants, which could not fail to pinch and to distress her. “She would NEVER be Lady Burridge.”

“Come, my dear mother, let us take a stroll in Reginald’s favourite hawthorn walk. It is to me always delightful to haunt those spots, before frequented by those we love, or by those we reverence and respect. I seem to hear the echo of their voices, and the tread of their feet. It is a sweet afternoon, and we will conclude our ramble by a trip to our neighbours, and see how they bear themselves—now the mirth and jollity of the day are passed.

Mr. Thorpe from Dacre Hall, entered—all hurry and haste.

“What might it be?”

“O, my ladies! my master’s portrait is come down from Mr. Phillip’s—what is to be done with it?”

“Unpack it, and hang it up; but mind that the nails are *strong*.—No Lady Arabella tumbling.”

“It can’t be done to-night; for I am the only sober working man in the village. It shall be unpacked; and pray come and look at it.”

Both the families united in a trip to Dacre Hall, where the portrait was unpacked, and made to lean against the wainscot. Every view of it seemed to bring the original more strongly to their recollection. And what an ORIGINAL!—how brave, how generous, how fond, and how social! He had the buoyancy of youth, without its indiscretion; the wisdom of age, with the vigour of manhood. What was “*Sweet Auburn*,” without the presence of MAJOR DACRE.

Thus they reasoned within themselves, as they continued to gaze upon his portrait—executed by the faithful and masterly hand of Mr. Phillips. As they gazed, they were struck and startled with the sound of a long, wild, and lengthened blast, upon the mysterious “IVORY HORN.”

“Who blows that horn, but *myself*?” exclaimed Thorpe.

He rushed out of their presence, to notify the daring trespasser. There was no one: yet still the horn continued its “*tone, tone, tavernne; tone, tavernne, tone!*” What might it mean? Had the portrait of Lady Arabella fallen a third time?

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But there is an END of CRANMER. The green curtain is rapidly falling—and there is scarcely time to step forward, on the proscenium, and say,

PLAUDITE, ET VALETE!

THE END

CORRECTIONS.

Vol. ii. p. 27, *for possit read posset.*

252, line 1, *for Timming's read Limner's.*

312, *for trissot read trussot.*

Vol. iii. p. 34, *for Holmes read Holme.*—The words in italics are taken from his *Academy of Armoury and Blazonry*; 1688, folio.

